



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
February 13 - 20, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Award-winning filmmaker set to cast Nunavummiut in Arctic drama

Two Lovers and a Bear is “a huge undertaking of collaboration”

PETER VARGA



Montreal-based director Kim Nguyen, pictured here in Iqaluit, will select more than 50 Nunavummiut for small roles in his next feature film, *Two Lovers and a Bear*. Nguyen will shoot scenes in Iqaluit and Apex in April with a cast and crew of more than 100. (PHOTO COURTESY OF MAX FILMS)

Iqaluit will become the setting of an \$8.7 million movie production, and producers are looking for local actors — aspiring and experienced — to be a part of it.

The Canadian production *Two Lovers and a Bear* will feature Tatiana Maslany, 29, star of the Canadian science fiction series *Orphan Black*, and American actor Dane DeHaan, also 29, who has starred in a string of successful U.S. feature films over the last five years.

Academy award-nominated director Kim Nguyen, of Montreal, will head up the production in Iqaluit for two weeks at the beginning of April, when the two lead actors arrive with a crew from Montreal.

“It’s a huge undertaking,” said Ellen Hamilton, whose Iqaluit-based company North Creative is co-producing the film under the direction of Montreal-based Max Films.

North Creative is hosting the casting call for up to 50 extras, Feb. 14, to appear in the film in non-speaking roles.

Nguyen and a team from Montreal are looking for Inuit men and women of all ages to appear in different scenes of the film, as well as 20 teenagers of all ages and ethnic backgrounds.

“The director really wants to show what it’s going to be like in 10 years in Iqaluit, or up in the North,” said Roselynn Akulukjuk of Iqaluit. As third assistant director on the project, she will co-ordinate and supervise all extras.

“Like it’s not only Inuit living up here, there’s different people living up here from all over the world as well,” she said. “So we want to show that in the film.”

One scene in the movie calls for teen-aged soccer players of Caucasian (white), Inuit, Ethiopian and East Indian background, she said.

Nguyen will select the extras. The director will also cast eight experienced Iqalungmiut actors for speaking roles on Feb. 13, Akulukjuk said, part of a separate arrangement.

All shooting in Iqaluit and Apex will take place in 12 days, starting in the first week of April. Nguyen’s crew will also shoot scenes in Timmins, Ont.

As the title suggests, the movie is a love story. Maslany and DeHaan play the role of “two sort of fragile people, who are struggling, and sort of fighting their inner demons,” Hamilton said.

“The thing that really brings it a fresh perspective, is that it’s set in the North.”

Iqaluit will double for a large unnamed Arctic community, and Apex for a small hamlet. Maslany plays the role of a young Inuk woman, and DeHaan a non-Inuk, who has a rare gift: an ability to speak to polar bears.

Although the movie is a serious drama, “there is a lot of stuff that does not happen in the real world. I can’t quote, but there is some crazy stuff that goes down,” Hamilton laughed.

Producer Roger Frappier, who headed up production of award-winning films such as *The Grand Seduction* and *Decline of the American Empire*, is leading the project.

“He’s considered one of the top producers in Canada,” Hamilton said. “He’s well known for making films that have commercial success, which is a rarity, as you can imagine, in Canada.”

Frappier and Nguyen are also including Iqalungmiut crew members to help with technical aspects of the production while in Iqaluit.

“Their goal, which I was very excited to hear about, both said ‘we want to include as many Nunavummiut as possible in our crew, and our cast,’ but they didn’t have any feet on the ground,” she said, and that’s where Hamilton’s work as a co-producer begins.

“The crew will be about 100 people, and it’s a huge undertaking of collaboration. And to know at the end of the day, you’re doing that around a story idea based in fantasy, is pretty exciting,” she said. “It’s not your ordinary day, when you’re working on a film set.”

Casting for extra roles in *Two Lovers and a Bear* takes place Saturday Feb. 14 at Nunattaq Suites, building 4141, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“They need people of every culture,” said Hamilton. “So if anybody’s thinking it’s something they might be interested in doing, they should come.”

Direct Link: <http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674award-winning-filmmaker-set-to-cast-nunavummiut-in-arctic-drama/>

Horrific Car Crash in Saskatchewan Kills Four Bright Lights in Aboriginal Arts

[ICTMN Staff](#)

2/13/15

Flags were lowered on Thursday February 12 in Regina and Ottawa as Canada mourned the deaths of four prominent artists in a horrific car wreck two days earlier.

Michele Sereda, 49, a co-founder and artistic director of the experimental theater company Curtain Razors; dancer and powwow instructor Lacy Morin-Desjarlais, 29, Saulteaux and Métis, of Regina; Michael Green, 58, of Calgary, a co-founder of the theater company One Yellow Rabbit, and Blackfoot elder Narcisse Blood, 60, Kainai First Nation, were riding together on their way to Piapot First Nation when the Subaru Outback driven by Sereda collided with a truck driven by Morley Hartenberger, 59, who also died.

The four had been heading to speak to students at Payepot School, where Sereda had taught for five years, and where now there are grief counselors on hand, [CBC News](#) reported.

Blood and Green had worked together on *Making Treaty 7*, a multifaceted theatrical performance that retells the story of the founding of southern Alberta by including the First Nations perspective into a cornucopia of aboriginal and non-Native musicians, dancers, poets and other performers, according to its website, which mourned their passing.

“The board and staff of Making Treaty 7 are deeply mourning today the tragic loss of Elk Shadow/Pona Ko’taksi, also known as Michael Green, and Middle Bull/Tatsikiistamik, also known as Narcisse Blood,” [Making Treaty 7](#) said in a statement. “Elk Shadow was the founder and visionary behind the *Making Treaty 7* project. We celebrate today his commitment to a shared belief that ‘We are all Treaty people.’ We are committed to ensuring that his spirit will live on. Elk Shadow, One of Long Vision, had no boundaries and could not see color. He was an inspiration to everyone he touched.”

Likewise the University of Regina, where Sereda and Morin-Desjarlais had deep ties, expressed grief and condolences.

"Lacy and Michele were fantastic role models for our students and were dedicated to working with First Nations communities," said University Dean of Fine Arts Rae Staseson [in a statement](#). "Michele’s energy and vision touched everyone she worked in our faculty and we are very proud of her accomplishments. She was a regular visitor in our Faculty with many collaborations and projects on the go.”

Morin-Desjarlais had recently performed in the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company's Rez Christmas show as well as teaching at the university. Her powwow class has been canceled for the term because of her death, the university said.

"As we begin to mourn Lacy's death, we echo the sentiments of many in saying that Lacy was a bright light in the arts community and we will miss her," said conservatory program coordinator Christa Eidsness in the school's statement. "Our thoughts and prayers are with all of Lacy's family and friends."

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/13/horrific-car-crash-saskatchewan-kills-four-bright-lights-aboriginal-arts-159179>

Awards celebrating aboriginal music mark 10 years with name change

Posted: 02/13/2015 12:59 PM



Iceis Rain performs at the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards in September 2014.

The Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards will celebrate its 10th anniversary in September with a new name.

Renamed the Indigenous Music Awards, it will once again be a headline event of Winnipeg's [Manito Ahbee Festival](#). The festival, which showcases indigenous music, art and culture, runs from Sept. 9-13.

The Indigenous Music Awards take place Sept. 11 and will be broadcast live on APTN.

Submissions in 29 categories are being accepted until May 1 and a list of nominees will be announced on June 23. The second round of voting is free until July 24 and will determine the award winners.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/music/Awards-celebrating-aboriginal-music-mark-10-years-with-name-change-291868601.html>

Metis actress Tantoo Cardinal to receive award for hard-fought acting career

By Nick Patch, The Canadian Press February 19, 2015



Actor Tantoo Cardinal is shown in a handout photo. As Metis actress Cardinal prepares to receive a lifetime achievement award, she remembers what originally inspired her to begin acting more than 40 years ago: anger. THE CANADIAN PRESS/HO-Nadia Kwandibens

TORONTO - As Metis actress Tantoo Cardinal prepares to receive a lifetime achievement award, she remembers what originally inspired her to begin acting more than 40 years ago: anger.

"It wasn't about a career at all — it was about having a voice," the Edmonton-raised 64-year-old said in a telephone interview this week.

"I don't know if people really can appreciate what that experience is — of attempted genocide, generations and generations and generations where your language is outlawed, your creativity is outlawed, anything you think or say or do is actually outlawed.

"There was a fire inside," she continued. "I had a huge rage inside about the way my people were perceived and the injustice of that.

"I have to cling to conviction, because that's my gun, you know?"

On Friday, Cardinal will receive ACTRA Toronto's Award of Excellence, a career-spanning honour previously presented to Rick Mercer, Fiona Reid and Shirley Douglas.

The award simultaneously recognizes a body of work and commitment to advocacy, and for Cardinal there was rarely much of a distinction between the two.

Whether acting in such large-scale Hollywood productions as "Dances with Wolves" and "Legends of the Fall" or indies including "Mothers&Daughters" and "Loyalties," Cardinal searched for roles that would expand the understanding of a culture she saw too often being demeaned in popular entertainment.

On the eve of her honour, Cardinal talked to The Canadian Press about her long career and ongoing activism.

CP: It's been 25 years since "Dances with Wolves" came out. What was the experience of making that film like, and seeing it go on to win seven Oscars (including best picture)?

Cardinal: It was profound on many levels. Here was a major Hollywood movie that was going to be done in the language — that was new in itself. In the course of shooting, I think the filmmakers learned something about the Indian world and that changed the movie. It became a movie about a love affair with the community rather than the love affair between those two white people in the middle of the story.

People completely missed why it was successful and just tried to do copies. The scripts that came after that were just — ugh, there were some rugged ones.

Had it not won (seven) Oscars, then it could still be cast aside — because it's mostly about Indians.

CP: Four years later you starred in "Legends of the Fall." Was there much difference to you whether you were acting in big or small movies?

Cardinal: I just go where I'm invited to go and I know I'm there for a reason — and it's not to be the best-dressed or the best-looking in the room. (laughs)

Those people were such wonderful human beings: Anthony Hopkins and Aidan Quinn and Brad Pitt and Gordon Tootoosis. We built such a wonderful community. It's all artists, right?

CP: You were arrested with Margot Kidder in 2011 protesting the Keystone Pipeline at the White House. Do you feel your voice was heard?

Cardinal: Oh yeah. Definitely. Look, (U.S. President Barack) Obama's holding back even against (Prime Minister Stephen) Harper. I don't know what he's going to be able to do ... but there is a conscience about climate change that he talks about, and Harper doesn't.

Answers have been edited and condensed.

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/Metis+actress+Tantoo+Cardinal+receive+award+hardfought/10825956/story.html>

Aboriginal Community Development

An Invitation to Understand This Remote First Nations Community

Posted: 02/13/2015 9:30 am EST Updated: 02/13/2015 9:59 am EST



by: Craig and Marc Kielburger

For the youth of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation community, the nearest high school is hundreds of kilometres away by plane. If you break a bone, it's another flight for treatment--the hospital's X-ray machine hasn't worked for two years.

But despite the challenges they face, none of the residents of this remote fly-in northern Ontario community--known simply as KI--would abandon their homes and land. And they're inviting all Canadians to come on a "reconciliation visit" to live with them for a week so we can understand why.

As Craig prepares to [defend Canadian author, Thomas King's, *The Inconvenient Indian*, on CBC's Canada Reads](#) in March, we've been thinking a lot about breaking barriers, which is the theme of this year's book debate. It seems one of the greatest barriers to addressing the problems facing our aboriginal communities is that most Canadians don't intuitively understand those problems. They're too far away--hidden in remote communities like KI.

Perhaps if more people could see with their own eyes, Canada might discover the will for change--as did a very high-profile circle of women this past September.

The group that went on the most recent, and little-known, visit in KI [included Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex](#) (wife of Queen's Elizabeth's youngest son Prince Edward), Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, incoming Lieutenant-Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Vicki Heyman, the wife of the U.S. Ambassador to Canada, and Sybil Veenman, former senior vice-president of Canadian mining giant Barrick Gold. They spend a few days in the community--and what they saw changed them.

Veenman tells us that, in her job as a mining executive, she had visited many developing communities around the world and witnessed the challenges they faced. "But to see it here in Ontario is an eye opening experience."

Although the homes in KI were a considerable improvement over the tin-roofed shacks she saw in communities overseas, Veenman was still shocked at the issues of overcrowding. "I was surprised by the extent of the issue," she adds.

The visitors saw the hospital's broken X-ray machine. They heard how, without a high school, only one in 10 local youth will complete their high school diploma.

But what really struck the visitors was the attitude of KI youth who, despite their community's conditions, have not given up hope for change. "I was really amazed and impressed by their enthusiasm," Veenman says.

It is the youth of KI who conceived and who have driven the reconciliation visit initiative. They're now turning their energy to getting their community its own high school.

By spending time in the community listening, hearing people share their stories, history and traditions, the visitors came to truly understand the connection between the community and the land. "Even the youth, they all value the tie to the land and their traditions," Veenman says.

What they saw and learned in northern Ontario has turned these women into activists. They are sharing their experiences, and they continue to meet regularly to discuss what else they can do.

"If, in my capacity, I can help shine a light on these communities... and the potential that they could have, then I do so willingly," the Countess [told an audience at Nipissing University](#) in North Bay after the visit.

Veenman is encouraging Canadians to take KI up on its invitation. "If more people did a reconciliation visit, they'd understand better." (The next KI visit takes place July 17 to 23, and is open to all Canadians--although the available spaces are filling up fast. Contact Andree@productionscazabon.com)

Every year, hundreds of young Canadians travel with us to visit and work in developing communities overseas. Invariably the experience--seeing with their own eyes the challenges and meeting extraordinary people--sparks a passion for positive change. If we are to tear down the barriers between Canada's aboriginal and non-aboriginal people and address the challenges in communities like KI, we need to spark that passion here.

This is the second in a four part series on aboriginal people and issues.

Brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger founded a platform for social change that includes the international charity, Free The Children, the social enterprise, Me to We, and the youth empowerment movement, We Day.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/craig-and-marc-kielburger/first-nations-community_b_6670640.html

Walpole community part of #ShutDownCanada

By [David Gough](#), QMI Agency

Friday, February 13, 2015 12:28:39 EST PM



Walpole Island members held a protest at the corner of Highway 40 and Dufferin Avenue in Wallaceburg on Friday, to make people aware of the large number of Canada's murdered and missing indigenous women and call on the federal government to create an independent inquiry to look into the issue. (DAVID GOUGH/ QMI Agency)

A handful of protesters from Walpole Island spent Friday morning at the corner of Highway 40 and Dufferin Avenue to honour and make people aware of the large number of Canada's murdered and missing indigenous women. They were part of a grassroots nationwide movement called #ShutDownCanada.

Organizer Theo Blackbird-John said it's unfortunate he and his community have to protest to draw attention to the missing women.

"We've been in discussion at the tables to get our message across for decades and we've noticed these stats (regarding missing and murdered women) were off for quite a long time now," Blackbird-John said.

"It's unfortunate it has to come to this point, but we have to create more public attention for the issue and raise awareness."

Blackbird-John said the response he has seen has been good. There was a few OPP vehicles in the area, but the protest was running smoothly shortly after it began.

"They're not stopping us, they seem to support the initiative."

While most vehicles stopped only briefly, Blackbird-John said the purpose of the protest was to impact the Canadian economy for a day and bring attention to the need for an

independent inquiry into the more than 2,000 cases of missing or murdered indigenous woman across Canada.

The protesters were planning on being on hand from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Walpole Island's protest is one of many grassroots protests being organized nationwide for a day of action by various First Nations communities.

Direct Link: <http://www.wallaceburgcourierpress.com/2015/02/13/walpole-community-part-of-shutdowncanada>

Kentville walk to draw attention to Cornwallis's policy on First Nations

[IAN FAIRCLOUGH VALLEY-SOUTHWEST](#)

Published February 14, 2015 - 8:30am



Lindsey Burgess, Lauren Milner and Richelle Brown Redden will be taking part in an awareness walk in Kentville on Saturday that they hope will restart discussion about renaming the Cornwallis River in Kings County. (IAN FAIRCLOUGH / Valley-Southwest Bureau)

A Kentville woman wants to restart public discussion on the idea of renaming the Cornwallis River through Kings County.

“This is about raising public awareness,” Richelle Brown Redden said of a short walk she has planned for Saturday, starting at the bridge over the river in Kentville.

Brown Redden said she was excited a few years ago when a school in Halifax bearing the name of former Nova Scotia governor Edward Cornwallis changed its name.

“I thought the ball was in motion, but then things just stopped,” said Brown Redden, a student at Nova Scotia Community College’s Kingstec campus in Kentville.

She said she and her 10-year-old son cross the Cornwallis River daily, and when he became aware of Cornwallis and his policy toward natives, he couldn't understand why the river had the name it does.

"I couldn't answer him when he asked why it hasn't changed."

That's when she thought she should try to raise awareness again on her own. She discussed the issue with some fellow students and said most had no idea who Cornwallis was and what he had done.

In 1749, as the British were colonizing the Halifax region, Cornwallis put a bounty on the scalps of natives, including women and children, vowing to clear the area of all Mi'kmaq.

"I think a lot of people just aren't aware," said Brown Redden, who is not a member of Canada's First Nations.

She said she hopes to have 30 people or so come out to walk from the Cornwallis River Bridge, up Cornwallis Street, past the Cornwallis Inn and back at noon Saturday.

She said she knows many people don't associate the name with the former governor, but it does affect people.

"I think our First Nations have had such a painful history in the province that it really shows that we believe in hope and in the future."

The Annapolis Valley First Nation band in Cambridge raised the issue of renaming the river with Kings County council in 2011.

The county said the issue falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Direct Link: <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1269257-kentville-walk-to-draw-attention-to-cornwallis%E2%80%99s-policy-on-first-nations>

Understanding the cost of the True North

By [Steve Mertil](#) / [Daily Brew](#) – Sun, 15 Feb, 2015

Canada nurtures its image as the True North. It's right there in the national anthem. But most of us who live within 200 miles of the U.S. border have no idea of what living the slogan actually means and what it costs.

For real northerners, it means fighting to maintain services and infrastructure southerners take for granted: water, sewer, power and food supplies.

Take [Pond Inlet](#), for instance. The [Nunavut](#) community of about 1,500 on northern Baffin Island was down to one working sewage-collection truck last week.

That is a crisis in a town that has lost its only mechanic, where a full septic tank means a home's water system automatically shuts off, making the house essentially uninhabitable. And in a high-Arctic winter, it also means some of the underground tanks were freezing because their internal heating systems weren't working.

The territorial government flew in a mechanic last Wednesday and by Friday one of the three broken-down sewage trucks was back on the road after its transmission was repaired, Darren Flynn, assistant deputy minister of community government services, told *Yahoo Canada News*.

The mechanic also looked over the remaining two sidelined vehicles, making up a list of needed replacement parts that will have to be ordered and flown in on an expedited basis.

The hamlet administration had already ordered new trucks, but they won't arrive until next September when the annual sealift drops off a year's supply of needed goods.

The trucks themselves are not cheap. Equipped with special heating systems to keep valves and pipes from freezing in an Arctic winter, they run up to \$230,000 and have to be replaced every seven to 10 years, Flynn said.

He called the situation in Pond Inlet unusual. Run by a hamlet council, it's had some problems, but other communities generally cope well.

"Communities are very well equipped," Flynn said. "When you live in the North you have to be a little bit more conscious of logistics."

The most comparable problem was a leaking water-reservoir cell in [Arviat](#), on the western shore of Hudson Bay, during the winter a few years ago.

"We had to come up with a plan to truck water a significant distance back into the town to keep up."

Difficulties common to northern communities

Such difficulties are familiar to every northern Canadian community and isolated First Nations reserves.

The Pond Inlet story is repeated elsewhere in the North, Sean Markey, an associate professor at Simon Fraser University's [School of Resource and Environmental Management](#), said.

Northern Canada was the scene of rapid post-war expansion, part of a federal policy to increase the scale of the resource economy. Communities were developed as bases for a

stable labour force as opposed to transient work camps. They also brought more government services to northern regions.

But the 1980s brought slowdowns in resource activities and some withdrawal of government services. Markey, who has studied northern communities but not those in the far north of Nunavut, said companies that once helped sustain one-industry towns withdrew their responsibilities.

“What’s happened over the last 30 years or so is that infrastructure has just continued to degrade and we haven’t been either maintaining it adequately and certainly not in a comprehensive way replacing it with an eye toward the 21st century.”

Nunavut’s extreme remoteness presents especially tough challenges that have loaded costs onto Ottawa, which provides about 90 per cent of its funding, and has made it hard to attract resource investment to the 16-year-old territory.

Carved out of the eastern half of the Northwest Territories in 1999, it covers 20 per cent of Canada’s geographic land mass. But it has a population of only about 32,000 people – roughly the same as Campbell River, B.C. – spread across 25 communities.

About a quarter of Nunavut’s largely Inuit population live in and around the capital [Iqaluit](#), on the south coast of Baffin Island, with the rest scattered in communities mostly dotted near the coast of Hudson Bay and the Arctic Sea.

Nunavut’s port facilities are rudimentary despite having the longest coastline of any jurisdiction in Canada and being dependent on summer deliveries by sea of most goods.

Iqaluit’s harbour, which receives the biggest annual seaborne supply shipment, is too shallow to accommodate the ship, so cargo is loaded onto small barges that are pulled into the city’s little port. Frobisher Bay’s 10-metre tides allow only eight hours a day for unloading, and that’s only when the weather’s good.

“It takes at least seven to 10 days to offload a regular supply vessel,” Nunavut Premier Peter Taptuna told *Yahoo Canada News*. “Down south it takes an hour.”

Of course there are no roads linking Nunavut’s far-flung hamlets. Cargo that isn’t delivered by sea in the ice-free months must come by air at sometimes astronomical cost.

Nunavut has only two paved airstrips

But the territory has only two paved airstrips, one at Iqaluit International Airport, which started as a Second World War U.S. Air Force base, and another at Rankin Inlet.

The rest are gravel strips that need regular, costly replenishment of the aggregate so they remain unusable.

“A couple of days of hard rain usually prevents aircraft from landing into these communities for two or three days or even longer,” Taptuna said in an interview from his hometown of Kugluktuk, in the western Arctic.

Most Canadians are by now familiar with [food-price horror stories](#) in the North, despite federal subsidies—the \$26 carton of orange juice, seven bucks for a head of lettuce, \$7 for loaf of bread. But doing anything is costly in Nunavut.

With tiny communities scattered across two million square kilometres, it’s hard to consolidate services such as health care (costly air medevacs for anything serious), social services, schools or transportation.

“Up here we need 25 of everything,” Taptuna said.

The federal government’s [financial support](#) of the territory has doubled in the last decade, from \$854 million in fiscal year 2005-06 to \$1.5 billion in 2015-16—about \$40,000 per capita.

It’s enough to barely keep up with operating costs, the premier said, and leaves very little for improving infrastructure.

“For the most part we do have to go to Ottawa and get approvals for some of the bigger infrastructure-building items, such as the marine facility in Pangnirtung.”

For example, all electric power for Nunavut’s communities comes from diesel generators, some more than 40 years old.

“They’ve gone past their useful lifespan,” Taptuna said. “It’s coming to a point where it’s very difficult to maintain; it’s a high cost. It’s very difficult to plan for these things when it’s a struggle just to get funds to do that.”

Public-private partnership funds airport expansion

The territory is funding the \$73-million expansion of Iqaluit’s airport via a public-private partnership with Winnipeg-based [Arctic Infrastructure Partners](#), to be paid out over 30 years.

Things may change as Nunavut proceeds with [devolution negotiations](#) with Ottawa, which will complete the territory’s two-decade transition to a status more like that of a province or Yukon and N.W.T. in terms of control over its economic levers. It is already responsible for delivering health and social services.

The federal and territorial governments named their negotiators last October. Taptuna said he expects they’ll meet Ottawa’s deadline of an agreement-in-principle with a year.

“I think we’re on track,” he said, adding Ottawa’s chief negotiator also led the federal team on N.W.T.’s devolution talks and both sides have the Yukon and N.W.T. experiences as a guide.

Markey noted benefit agreements that follow in the wake of title and treaty deals potentially can result in massive wealth transfers that enable aboriginal communities with their own resources to enhance their social and physical infrastructure.

Successful talks should lead to Ottawa approving an increase in Nunavut’s borrowing ability for projects like the Iqaluit airport improvement.

“With the debt cap increase it’ll give us more ability to do more projects like that,” Taptuna said. “It is quite expensive, but at the same time if we waited another four or five years the price will probably double.”

The prospect of better transportation links to the south such as upgraded ports and airports, as well as improvements to other infrastructure, should attract more resource companies to exploit Nunavut’s treasure trove of minerals and sizable oil reserves, the premier hopes.

The territory currently has two operating mines; a gold mine at Baker Lake and an iron ore mine on northern Baffin Island. It already takes a lot longer to get mineral-extraction operations running in the North than the average seven-year period to bring southern deposits into production, Taptuna said.

Giving the territory jurisdiction could help speed that process and also ensure resource exploitation is environmentally sustainable.

“If a development is not going to do that, certainly there’s not going to be automatic approvals when we get to the stage of licensing and permitting of any development,” he said.

Nunavut has a couple of powerful allies at the cabinet table in the form of territorial native [Leona Aglukkaq](#), the environment minister also in charge of northern development, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper himself, who makes annual trips to the Arctic.

But Markey said Harper’s interest in the North so far hasn’t translated into a systemic approach to northern development, or even a coherent vision.

“The process becomes more crisis-driven or politically driven in terms of where investments are made rather than taking a look at the big picture,” he said.

Taptuna is under no illusion Ottawa will open its purse, especially in a time of uncertain revenues. The challenge, he said, is to educate southern politicians and Canadians

generally about Nunavut's future economic potential in an era of climate change, and its part in cementing Canadian control of its northern waters.

"We've got to remember Arctic people are more or less asserting sovereignty for the rest of Canada. Most Canadians do understand that the North is an important place."

Direct Link: <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/understanding-the-cost-of-true-north-150319678.html>

Two toddlers killed in house fire on Saskatchewan First Nation

QMI AGENCY

First posted: Tuesday, February 17, 2015 02:19 PM EST | Updated: Tuesday, February 17, 2015 02:22 PM EST



A two-year-old boy and an 18-month-old girl died in a house fire early Tuesday on Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation in western Saskatchewan, police say.

Loon Lake Mounties were called to the fire at about 1:30 a.m., according to a news release.

Police said they saw a man carry the two children out of the house, which was engulfed in flames, but the kids were pronounced dead at the scene.

No other injuries were reported.

Police said they're investigating and won't release the names of the victims at the family's request.

This is the third fatal house fire on a reserve in Saskatchewan in the past three months.

In January, a 24-year-old woman and a 10-year-old boy died in a house fire on the English River First Nation.

Before that, in December, a 61-year-old woman and her 10-year-old grandson died in a blaze at Ahtahkakoop First Nation.

After those fires, the Assembly of First Nations called on the federal government to improve fire services on reserves across Canada, saying more money is needed for First Nations infrastructure.

Many First Nations families use wood stoves and don't have fire services to inspect homes and prevent fires, or respond to them when they happen, the AFN said.

Direct Link: <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/02/17/two-toddlers-killed-in-house-fire-on-saskatchewan-first-nation>

Former First Nation fire chief says resources, education needed

Former Keeseekoose First Nation fire chief Shylo Stevenson says \$10,000 in fire protection funding is not enough

Reported by **Kelly Malone**

First Posted: Feb 18, 2015 4:39pm | Last Updated: Feb 19, 2015 10:39am

A fatal fire on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation this week brought the continuing issue of fire prevention for First Nation communities across the province to light.

Former Keeseekoose First Nation fire chief Shylo Stevenson said the blaze paints a stark picture of the difference between the services available on a First Nation compared to a Rural Municipality (RM).

"You are 10 times more likely to die in a house fire on a First Nation than a R.M. that's 30 miles away," he said.

Stevenson runs Blues Brother Consulting which works with Saskatchewan First Nations to find ways to increase fire prevention and protection. When he began as the fire chief on the Keeseekoose First Nation in 2001, Stevenson said they responded to a fire in a school with a truck, shovels, and buckets.

"We could not fight the fire because we had no money whatsoever from the reserve or Indian Affairs," he said adding the school burnt to the ground.

"(Fire Protection Funding in 2012 of) \$7,000 was not even enough to keep fuel in the truck for a full season for fire calls."

The community decided to rally together by allocating money from other programs and fundraising to get money for equipment. After purchasing the equipment a new program from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern development returned 50 per cent of the costs. Today the First Nation has a full time fire department.

Stevenson said the story on Keeseekoose is an anomaly.

"On a First Nation there are no guidelines or rules or regulations for anyone to follow. We are just expected to go fight a house fire in our civilian clothes," he said.

Fire Prevention Funding has recently gone up to around \$10,000 per year. Stevenson said First Nations use it up quickly and are left with the choice of either no funding or cutting other programs.

"To invest more money into a fire department they have to take out from another program and run that program short which a lot of First Nations aren't comfortable doing," he said, adding one season of grass fires will cost the entire amount.

"That's why we need more advocating at the federal level from our chiefs and councils and the FSIN level to say we need more money."

Since Dec. 29, 2014 there have been three fatal fires on Saskatchewan First Nations. Six people have died, four were children.

For First Nations who are not in a financial position to invest in their own fire department, Stevenson said it's important to work and build a relationship with the nearby RMs, which can be a difficult feat.

"Not a lot of people understand the whole situation with limited resources coming into a First Nation and not knowing how to approach towns and RMs and always being in a deficit to the neighbouring towns and RMs," he said.

"There's an issue that needs to be addressed there."

Stevenson said placing blame will not stop future fires.

"Sitting here accusing each other is not going to get us anywhere. There is a lot of hurt feelings, and a lot of frustration, but we have to move forward from this in a positive way," he said.

Stevenson said First Nations leaders, R.M. leaders, provincial leaders and fire chief organizations need to come together to find a way to spread fire-safe education and make

sustainable funding plans. He added that Aboriginal Affairs should also increase funding for fire prevention on reserve.

Direct Link: <http://cjme.com/story/former-first-nation-fire-chief-says-resources-education-needed/536185>

Aboriginal Crime & Justice

Aboriginal Justice Strategy gets \$11.1M boost

QMI Agency

First posted: Saturday, February 14, 2015 02:33 PM EST



Justice Minister Peter MacKay announced a boost in funding for the Aboriginal Justice Strategy. (DARREN MAKOWICHUK/QMI Agency file photo)

The Aboriginal Justice Strategy, which aims to address the disproportionately high rates of victimization, crime, and incarceration experienced by native peoples, received an \$11 million boost Saturday.

"Over the years, community-based programs across the country have delivered results in reducing crime and victimization in Aboriginal communities, lowering recidivism, and reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal Canadians in the corrections system," Justice Minister Peter MacKay said in Halifax.

Through the program, the government works with provinces, territories and Aboriginal communities to support community-based justice programs that it says provides an

alternative to the mainstream justice system for less serious offences in appropriate circumstances.

The \$11.1 million funding will support approximately 275 community-led programs that serve more than 800 urban, rural, and Northern communities, both on- and off-reserve, the feds say.

Direct Link: <http://www.torontosun.com/2015/02/14/aboriginal-justice-strategy-gets-111m-boost>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

First Nations schools need equal funding, local control, chief says

Nishnawbe Aski Nation continues negotiations to improve education

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 13, 2015 6:30 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 13, 2015 6:30 AM ET

A career fair for Aboriginal students in Thunder Bay, Ont. is just one example of how First Nations are directly addressing the needs of their students better than the federal government can, says Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Goyce Kakegamic.

The event, held on Thursday, brought First Nations high school students in the city together with prospective employers to encourage students to stay in school.

Kakegamic said it's important to pay special attention to teenagers, who must leave their remote communities where there are no high schools, to pursue an education in the city.

"They endure culture shock and a lot of them don't quite make it to proceed in their educational pursuits," he said. "Some of them end up in kind of self-destruction because of quitting school."

"That's a challenge that we want to address: how can we help them to be empowered to, in spite of their social challenges, see they can succeed?" he added.

The Nishnawbe Aski Nation continues its negotiations with the federal government seeking more funding and more control over the education of its own children.

Currently First Nations-run schools receive one-third to nearly one-half less funding per student compared to provincially-funded schools.

"The people are saying we know what's best for our children," Kakegamic said, but more funding is required to make it happen.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-schools-need-equal-funding-local-control-chief-says-1.2955464>

There Is A Way To Fix First Nations Education And This Is How It Starts

Posted: 02/14/2015 9:05 am EST Updated: 02/14/2015 7:59 pm EST



It took 15 years for a new elementary school to open in Attawapiskat after the old one was shut down. It doesn't have to be this way. (Photo: The Canadian Press)

When 12-year-old Shannen Koostachin walked into a school in suburban Toronto in 2007, she wondered why it was so much nicer than her own.

In this school, students learned in bright classrooms. Shannen went to class in a cold portable trailer. Her school didn't have a playground or a library or a computer lab or a gym. Why did schools in this part of Canada have these things, but not in her community?

Shannen grew up on the [Attawapiskat First Nation](#) in northern Ontario. Her elementary school [was closed in 2000](#) after it was discovered that diesel fuel had been leaking underneath the building for roughly two decades.

Afterwards, students were moved into portables set up adjacent to the school site, which was still contaminated with a toxic mix of chemicals and mould. The federal government had [repeatedly promised the community](#) a new school, which had yet to materialize.

While expert after expert has identified high school graduation as the key to closing the employment gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians, the quality of education on reserves [still lags dramatically](#). After that visit to Toronto, Shannen

wondered why one of the richest countries on Earth couldn't find a way to educate all its kids equally.

The question would change her young life. She made the difficult decision to move away from her family to attend a better school hundreds of kilometres away. Shannen and other students [spearheaded a campaign](#) for better schools on reserves and she quickly became an internationally recognized activist. In 2008, the group gave up a school trip to Niagara Falls to travel to Ottawa and tell the Conservative government that enough was enough.

Chuck Strahl, Indian Affairs minister at the time, told them that a new school simply [wasn't a top priority](#). Shannen looked Strahl right in the eyes and told him they weren't going to quit.

And she didn't. The federal government — which controls funding for aboriginal schools — finally bowed to pressure in 2009, promising a new elementary school would be built in Attawapiskat.

Tragically, Shannen never got to see the finished school. She was killed in a car crash in 2010 at the age of 15. But her dream lives on, as more people wonder: *Why can't we make education in Canada equitable for everyone?*

Last fall — for the first time in more than a decade — students started classes in a real school in Attawapiskat.

The people of the community are struggling with a multi-pronged crisis: decrepit housing, overcrowding, lack of access to clean water, substance abuse, suicide, teen pregnancy, a lack of jobs, and the traumatic legacy of residential schools.

A school is more than a school here. It's a place to get away from the mould and the overcrowding. It's a place to get out of the rain.

On a cold day in mid-September, the high school in Attawapiskat let out early after a student set off a fire extinguisher. It was pouring rain, but many of the students didn't go home. They lingered where walls met, smoking cigarettes, and trying to stay dry. Braving the elements was easier than braving life at home.

When the first peoples of James Bay signed Treaty Number 9 in the early 1900s, they did so in the hope that their children would receive a good education from the Canadian government in exchange for land rights.

The treaty reads: "His Majesty agrees to pay such salaries of teachers to instruct the children of said Indians, and also to provide such school buildings and educational equipment as may seem advisable to His Majesty's government of Canada."

To this day, the interpretation of the treaty is a matter of perpetual dispute.

What isn't in dispute is that education continues to represent the best hope for those born on struggling reserves. According to the 2006 census, 76.3 per cent of university graduates from reserves are employed. For off-reserve graduates, that number rises to 78.4 per cent. Those numbers are nearly level with the 81.8 per cent employment rate for non-aboriginal university graduates.

Those who quit school don't fare nearly as well.

Just 36.2 per cent of those on reserves who have not graduated from high school have a job. That's compared with just under 60 per cent for the non-aboriginal population with the same level of education.

Sadly, [50 per cent](#) of on-reserve aboriginals between the ages of 25 and 64 never complete high school, compared with just [four per cent](#) who complete a university program.

In Attawapiskat, it's not hard to see why so few succeed at school.

It's raining outside the gymnasium and Holly Nakogee is talking about her dreams.

The 19-year-old Grade 12 student who attends high school in Attawapiskat is an artist. She hopes one day to attend the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto. She wants to be a film producer or a video game animator or maybe even a journalist — she's not sure yet.

She's leaning toward animator, which makes it all the more frustrating that at the beginning of the semester her school lacks working computers as the result of a flood.

The Cree aren't known for displays of emotion. Stoicism is a requirement if you want to survive in the unforgiving wilderness around the great bay. Sometimes that stoicism manifests as shyness — many of the young people in Attawapiskat answer questions with silent stares.

But Holly's face shines when she talks about travelling after university. She is fascinated by ancient Rome and Greece and wants to visit Pompeii to see history frozen in time.

It wasn't so long ago that Holly was wearing her coat inside the freezing-cold portables, back in the days when she went to school with Shannen. It was just one of many challenges she has had to overcome to get this far in her schooling.

The fourth youngest of 13 siblings and step-siblings, Holly didn't get her own room until just a few years ago. That was after she moved out of a mould-infested home where she shared a room with two brothers, two sisters and her mom. There were holes in the floor and a large crack under the door that would let snow in during the winter. Electricity was spotty.

She didn't realize the conditions were the cause of her breathing problems until after she moved out. She had always considered her situation to be normal.

Today, Holly lives in a better home than most on the reserve, but she still doesn't have anywhere to do her homework.

Chief Theresa Spence says adequate housing is the greatest obstacle to improving education in Attawapiskat. She estimates that 95 per cent of homes in the community are substandard. The water that comes out of people's taps [isn't drinkable](#), so the entire community is forced to fill plastic jugs from a single spigot at a water depot.

Holly feels trapped in Attawapiskat. If she gets out for university or college, she doesn't want to come back. But escaping Attawapiskat isn't easy.

She has already moved south three times in search of a better education but has come home every time

Sick of portables, Holly and her older sister, Dakota, first moved south to Cochrane, Ont., in Grade 7 to attend higher-quality schools. Just two years apart in age, they looked so similar that people would often confuse them for twins. They were inseparable.

When Holly was a toddler, she called her sister Akwao, a mispronunciation of the Cree word for lady. The nickname stuck.

"[She] was like any other older sister" Holly said, "a bully, but also my best friend."

Their plan to get a better education didn't go as planned. They lived with their father and his wife in Cochrane, but moved home due to a troubled relationship with their stepmother.

Then her sister got pregnant. After giving birth, she got sick. Holly says her sister went to the hospital in Attawapiskat and was told she probably had a cold. But the cold didn't go away. Dakota sought treatment in nearby Moose Factory, then in Kingston and eventually at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto.

Three months after giving birth to baby Elizabeth, Dakota died of kidney failure on April 23, 2010. Later, the family would learn that she had been suffering from lupus, a disease that is rarely fatal when treated. She was 16.

Akwao was gone.

Despite the tragedy all around her, Holly moved to Cochrane again in Grade 10 to take advantage of better textbooks and technology. Things went well academically, but it was just too hard to be away from home. She missed Dakota. She missed her family.

She dropped out, moved home, and didn't go back to school for a year.

Holly eventually returned to class in Attawapiskat, but for her final year of high school she decided to give Cochrane one last shot.

Once again, calamity struck.

On May 23, 2014, Holly's beloved niece Alexa was struck and killed by a truck pulling out of a driveway in Attawapiskat. She had been born just three days before Dakota's death four years earlier.

Holly returned for the funeral, and Alexa's older sister begged her to stay. Reminded of her own bond with Dakota, she decided she could not go back to school in Cochrane.

Despite everything, she has not given up her dreams.

"We need to end the systematic underfunding once and for all. Once we do that, these communities will start to move ahead in ways that people right now can't even imagine."

NDP MP Charlie Angus is about to visit Attawapiskat's [new elementary school](#) for the first time. Walking through the dusty streets, Angus — who once played in a punk band with fellow MP Andrew Cash — is greeted like a rock star. Some people offer rides, others just want to say hello. The fresh Tim Hortons coffee and doughnuts he has brought from Timmins aren't hurting his popularity. Neither are his regular trips to the reserve.

Shannen's father, Andrew Koostachin, remembers that some time after Angus became Attawapiskat's representative in 2004, the NDP MP asked him if any other MPs had ever visited the community.

"MPs? Who are they?" Andrew remembers replying. "Mounted police?"

Angus has made it a point to visit Attawapiskat regularly and has long fought for more funding from the federal government for the First Nations communities in his sprawling riding of Timmins–James Bay. He was an integral part of the campaign led by Shannen and her friends for a new school.

But the completion of the school is more than a political victory for Angus, it is also personal. In 2008, Shannen and her older sister, Serena, moved in with the Angus family so they could attend high school in New Liskeard, Ont.

There's a rumour circulating that a fox has been spotted in the new school. The talk around town is that Shannen's spirit has returned in animal form.

"Shannen is in that school for sure," Angus said. "Not a day goes by that I don't think of that girl.... There was something really hard to pin down about Shannen, but she had something. I noticed the first time I saw her. There's a spirit there."

Even after Shannen's death in 2010, Angus continued to push Parliament [to adopt a motion](#) in honour of her dream of equal education for all Canadians. Among other things, the motion called on the House of Commons to provide funding to "put reserve schools on par with non-reserve provincial schools." In February of 2012, the non-binding motion [was passed unanimously](#) by the House.

Angus is frustrated that the promise of the motion has yet to be realized. He notes that while Attawapiskat may have won a new school, students on the nearby Kashechewan First Nation are spending another year in portables. The high school's gym is closed because of a leaking roof. He says money has been promised by Ottawa but has yet to arrive.

"Here we are in Canada, where education is so arbitrary, one community now has a beautiful school and another community is making do with fourth world conditions," Angus said later.

"You cannot educate a generation of youth unless you have a standard, a firm standard, that's not arbitrary, that's not based on the whim of a minister or bureaucrat. Every child has to have these rights."

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt's office says the government has committed [to support the construction of a new roof](#) for the high school in Kashechewan and notes a \$20 million investment in education on the reserve since 2005-2006.

At the moment, progress on more sweeping investments in aboriginal education across Canada has stalled.

"It's just stupid politics" Angus said about the recent collapse of a Conservative deal with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) that would have seen legislation passed [providing \\$1.9 billion in new funds](#), most of it to be spent in the first three years.

The deal fell apart along familiar fault lines. Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative government were willing to hand over more money, but only in exchange for greater accountability and strict adherence to educational standards set in Ottawa. Many chiefs feared the bill would only deepen federal control over education rather than transfer more responsibility to bands.

The government seems to fear that, without accountability, new investments will go to waste. Informed by the memory of residential schools and a belief in self-determination, many chiefs feel less involvement from the government is the only path to success.

And so nothing happens.

The lack of unity among Canada's disparate First Nations, coupled with Harper's notorious preference for negotiating with the AFN alone, only made matters worse.

Ultimately, AFN national chief [Shawn Atleo would resign](#) amid accusations that he was selling out his own people by supporting the legislation. Harper has placed the failure of the bill [firmly on the doorstep of the AFN](#), and Valcourt's office says the legislation won't move forward without the AFN's support.

Angus thinks the federal government is capable of formulating a solution.

"Funding education isn't difficult to figure out how to do it," the MP said as he approached the entrance to the new school.

"We figured this out over 100 years ago across the rest of the country, and Indian Affairs still plays games."

There are countless reports available on whether aboriginal children receive the same funding on a per-capita basis as non-aboriginal kids. According to the Fraser Institute, Aboriginal Affairs estimates that [it spends more than the provinces do](#) on education on a per-capita basis in every province except Manitoba. The AFN [strongly disagrees](#).

The government [touts its investments](#). The AFN calls for more funding.

Somewhere along the line, the kids get lost in the calculations.

One teacher in Attawapiskat who has taught in both New Zealand and the United States, says she's never had so few resources.

"My budget at this school is significantly less than any budget I've ever had," she said. "So [it's] used to buy primary colours of paint. And then you're tacking on like \$1,000 dollars of shipping ... which decreases your budget even more."

Another high school teacher who spoke to HuffPost Canada says that he doesn't have enough textbooks for his class and that a lack of hiring means many of his colleagues are teaching courses outside their qualifications. Gym class has been cut from four grades to two.

Whether funding is equal or not, it is clear to these two teachers that the result is not equality of education.

After visiting the new school, Angus promises to fight until that equality is achieved, until every First Nations community has a real school like the one Shannen dreamed of.

"Until those children have the same rights as everyone else in Canada, this will not be the country that it was meant to be. So the fight goes on," Angus said.

There is exactly one teacher of Cree descent in Attawapiskat.

Although there are many teaching assistants from the community, the lack of aboriginal teachers can conjure dark memories. Many still remember when the children of James Bay were taken from their families and sent to St. Anne's residential school. There, white male teachers sought to wipe away their culture like chalk from a blackboard. Many children suffered physical, psychological and sexual abuse. Survivors remember being shocked in [a homemade electric chair](#) and being forced to eat their own vomit.

Unsurprisingly, white teachers can get a rough ride when they first arrive in town.

One teacher, "John," says he was greeted with shouts of "Go home, whitey" and volleys of rocks. His home was vandalized on a nightly basis. He asked HuffPost Canada not to use his real name.

After one year of initiation, things started to improve. "The second year they say, 'Oh look, he stayed. He must be alright.'" Today John says he loves living in Attawapiskat and wants to stay as long as he can.

He attributes the community's initial reaction to the legacy of residential schools.

Angus says that, despite the seeing "generation after generation sacrificed in the system," the people here still want to see the treaty's education promises fulfilled.

It's a sentiment echoed by Chief Theresa Spence.

Spence is a divisive figure. Her 2013 hunger strike for a meeting with the prime minister captured the attention of the nation and the sympathy of countless Canadians. Others, however, have accused her of financial mismanagement and even of corruption. In 2014, her partner and former co-manager of Attawapiskat [was charged with fraud and theft](#). Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is currently asking the reserve to [repay more than \\$1.8 million](#) in housing spending that could not be substantiated by a recent audit.

Spence feels that when it comes to both her and her community, the media have a tendency to "twist the story" rather than focus on the facts on the ground. She says she is focused on the future.

"Attawapiskat is always going to be here, and we're proud people, and our culture has always been our strongest foundation," Spence said. "We went through so much in our life, especially the residential school, but we're here to heal and looking forward for the future with positive attitude."

Walk along the river to the new school, and you'll see why people stay. At dusk, the light plays off the ripples in the water and shimmers like the diamonds dug up by De Beers down the road. Attawapiskat is a national symbol of the ugliness that plagues Canada's remote reserves, but it can be a place of great beauty.

"We honour the land because the land is there for us. It gives us life," Spence said. "[DeBeers has] that phrase, 'Diamonds are forever.' So is our land and our culture. It's forever."

The chief, who says she's working on deepening her own knowledge of Cree culture, wants to see more traditional teaching in Attawapiskat and Cree language immersion from kindergarten through Grade 3. She argues, however, that there simply isn't the funding at the moment.

A teacher said she fears that many of her students have internalized the message passed down from the residential school that their culture is useless. She thinks that is a key part of why so many young people in Attawapiskat don't expect much from themselves. Why most kids never graduate from high school.

Charlie Angus describes a "cultural reticence" that keeps many Cree from speaking up. It's something that can make it difficult to succeed in a Western-style classroom.

Rather than participate, many students hide their faces behind hats and hoodies.

John, the teacher, said he has gone as far as to ask his students to respond to questions by shrugging their shoulders, just so he has something to mark.

He wishes he better understood traditional Cree methods of teaching. He fears that for now, Attawapiskat simply isn't capable of producing homegrown teachers.

"To send somebody to four years of university plus teacher's college is a huge monumental task and at this point a lot of the students don't have the fortitude to do it," John said. "So, for now, it's going to be white folk teaching the natives again."

It doesn't have to be this way.

For nearly 20 years, the Mi'kmaw of Nova Scotia have been running their own school system.

In 1997, a historic tripartite agreement [transferred jurisdiction over education](#) from the federal government to the Mi'kmaw and created Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, an education authority that functions much like a school board.

Unlike a provincial school board, however, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey does not direct the Mi'kmaq schools in the province. Instead, it functions as [an advisory body](#), lending

expertise and advice rather than controlling the schools under its purview. It distributes roughly \$47 million a year in funding to its member communities.

The agreement requires that First Nations schools in the province provide programs comparable to those in the rest of Canada, ensuring that students' credentials will be recognized nationwide.

At the same time, [Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey](#) has put cultural education [at the forefront of its efforts](#) and Mi'kmaq language courses are now offered at every high school under its supervision. Last year saw the first class of students graduate from a Mi'kmaw immersion program at Chief Allison Bernard Memorial High School in Eskasoni.

The results have been nothing short of astounding. In 2012-2013, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey managed a high school graduation rate [just shy of 88 per cent](#), more than double the national First Nations average of roughly 35 per cent.

Perhaps even more impressive is the success Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey has achieved in helping Mi'kmaw students become Mi'kmaw teachers. Roughly [50 per cent of instructors](#) in the system are now Mi'kmaw.

It's a crucial piece of the puzzle, one that creates a virtuous circle. The better the system gets, the more Mi'kmaw teachers it produces, and the more Mi'kmaw teachers join the system, the better it becomes at meeting the cultural needs of its students.

And while an isolated reserve such as Attawapiskat faces unique challenges, the Mi'kmaw example illustrates that aboriginal education is not an impossible problem.

If Canada wants more young people like Holly to fulfill their promise, it's a problem the nation has to solve.

It's November in Toronto, and Holly is doing her best not to look scared.

Sitting on a streetcar bound for a portfolio seminar at the Ontario College of Art and Design, she tries to get a handle on the directions back to her lodgings. It's a straight shot back across Queen Street, but the prospect of navigating the big city alone is causing panic.

When the college comes into view, that panic turns to fear.

Moving from a remote reserve like Attawapiskat to a major city for school comes with a steep learning curve.

According to John, three high school graduates left Attawapiskat to pursue post-secondary schooling last year. They have all returned home.

After the seminar, Holly visits a nearby art store and gets lost amid the paints and paper. After buying enough supplies to finish a mural back home, she decides she wants to go to a Starbucks – she has never been to one before.

As she walks past the sweeping facade of the Art Gallery of Ontario, Holly turns and says that one day her art will hang inside the museum.

Back in Attawapiskat a few days later, Holly posts a photo of her kitchen wall to Facebook. With the supplies from Toronto, she has completed a mural she started in 2012 of the family she has lost.

On the right, her sister Dakota cradles her daughter.

On the left, Holly has added her niece Alexa.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/14/attawapiskat-first-nations-education_n_6665198.html

Student association proposes mandatory indigenous course at U of W

By: Jessica Botelho-Urbanski

- Posted: 02/15/2015 7:19 PM |

A University of Winnipeg student group is making a big move to try and combat racism on campus.

The University of Winnipeg Students' Association (UWSA) is proposing an indigenous course requirement for new students starting in the fall semester of 2016. The requirement would involve students taking three credit hours of study in indigenous history or culture -- the equivalent to one semester-long course, in most cases -- to graduate.

The post-secondary requirement for all students would be the first of its kind in Canada. At the University of Regina, an indigenous course requirement is only mandatory for arts students.

UWSA president Rorie McLeod said the University of Winnipeg should be the place to start a new academic trend.

"The indigenous requirement is an expression of how we feel universities should operate. It is incumbent upon universities to operate as hubs of critical thought, to invest ourselves

not only in an extracurricular sense, but also in our common curriculum towards these types of social problems," McLeod said.

"Racism is unacceptable, bigotry is unacceptable and this requirement is not a solution to that, but it is within our powers. It's very doable and ultimately it would be a step forward for the University of Winnipeg and Winnipeg in general."

In combing through the U of W's course catalogue, the UWSA found at least 100 courses in 17 departments that would meet the criteria they propose for the indigenous course requirement.

The UWSA's motion, created in conjunction with the University of Winnipeg's Aboriginal Students' Council, will be reviewed by the University of Winnipeg Senate within the next two months, McLeod said. The Senate has final say over the university's academic curriculum.

"Despite the fact that it isn't common for a students' union to be seeking new academic requirements for the students, I think that when one steps back and looks broadly, I'm really proud that us and the Aboriginal Students' Council decided to take this on," McLeod said.

Responses he has heard from students have been largely positive so far, but there have been a few naysayers, McLeod said.

"There are definitely folks who question the merits of indigenous knowing and there are folks who think that putting additional requirements on students will make it more difficult for some folks to graduate. But to be honest, I think that both those perspectives are not founded in fact. I think they're founded on a fairly casual and sort of knee-jerk reaction," the student president said.

One recent graduate said she wished the indigenous course requirement were already implemented when she studied film at the University of Winnipeg last year.

"A lot of people right now are coming out of high school with very minimal indigenous history lessons. For me, the only real history lesson I got about it was when I did a program focused on indigenous students that also gave us the historical background of what indigenous people have gone through in Canada," said Sonya Ballantyne, a Cree woman who hails from The Pas.

Because first-year university students are often looking to discover where their passions lie, Ballantyne thinks the requirement could help them push their personal boundaries for the better.

"I think it would probably get people into various courses of study that they might not be interested in at first," she said. "(Indigenous studies) is such a multifaceted course that

could be applied to anything, for example Canadian law or even sociology or psychology."

Ballantyne also cited law and policing as possible fields of study for students inspired by indigenous coursework.

"I think it would be a good course to maybe start in high school as well. U of W is in a pretty special location where a large portion of the population is native. I think it would be a cool way to bridge the gap between native people, people of colour and white people," she said. "Knowledge helps defend against racism."

About 12 per cent of University of Winnipeg students self-identify as First Nations, Metis and Inuit, according to the university's indigenous studies department.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Student-association-proposes-mandatory-indigenous-course-at-U-of-W-292028021.html>

Max FineDay: Canada's cities need a school system focused on First Nations

Max FineDay

Contributed to The Globe and Mail

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Max FineDay is president of the University of Saskatchewan Student Union.

"There's no such thing as a dropout – there are forced-outs." With that phrase, Jane Elliott, an anti-racism advocate and former third-grade teacher, perfectly describes how Canadian education fails First Nations students. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, the dropout rate for indigenous peoples is four times higher than the national average.

This failure to educate indigenous students should alarm every Canadian. First Nations and Metis youth will make up 40 per cent of Saskatchewan's school-aged population by 2020, with similar rising indigenous populations in other areas of Canada. This very young population – the fastest-growing population in Canada – is being undervalued and underserved by the existing education system.

When I was a child going to urban public schools, there was rarely any mention of my people or our history. My class may have learned to make bannock over a fire on some field trip, or heard one day about a footnote of First Nations history, but that was the extent of it until I reached high school. Even then, beyond a brief unit here or there, learning about indigenous peoples in any meaningful way was deemed “optional.” My classmates and I learned more about the Magna Carta and the Treaty of Versailles than the treaties my ancestors signed in the territory we were living in.

Indigenous children need, and deserve, an education that acknowledges their peoples and their contributions to Canada. Indigenous nations have trusted Canadian schools to provide what indigenous children need to succeed. The schools have failed.

Indigenous children are given less, expected to overcome more, and not afforded the care and attention other children receive. We must make education relevant to indigenous youth, to discuss histories that are often left out or glossed over. It’s time to celebrate First Nations history, culture, language, ceremony, and worldviews. To incorporate this knowledge consistently, even daily, throughout the curriculum to ensure indigenous students’ academic success.

It’s time for a distinct school system focused on indigeneity to exist in Canada’s cities.

Localized, place-based education rooted in the teachings of the Nation on whose territory the school resides would transform indigenous student success. Having urban schools focus on academic excellence through meaningful inclusion of indigenous content in each subject area, guided by indigenous principles, and prioritizing indigenous language fluency and retention is rarely, if ever, available. Some urban schools focus on indigenous learners, but often not until the damage has been done. Many of those students have already been forced out of the school system after not finding relevant content. Indigenous-focused schools then try to remedy other schools’ failures, by which time it could be more difficult for the students to reach their full potential.

Education has been used as a tool to erase First Nations identity. The residential school system, unfortunately, was very effective in its goal of destroying the Indian in the child. Promotion of Indigenous identity and ways of education are needed to undo generations of damage perpetrated on indigenous people. We can heal, and have successful indigenous populations, by adopting indigenous language, literacy and numeracy; indigenous philosophy; indigenous games; indigenous art, drama, dance, oral traditions; and an understanding of science from an indigenous perspective.

Indigenous educational focus must not be limited to remedial education when the mainstream system has failed. We need these schools to begin at early childhood and continue through high school. We need full, rigorous, indigenous-focused academic programs where students can strive for academic excellence. These schools will challenge the idea that indigenous people are simply poor people with needs, and will instead acknowledge that they are full of potential that can be realized in schools that

teach all required skills and knowledge in the rich cultural and linguistic traditions that exist across the country. Relevant extra-curricular programming in sports, arts, student leadership, and gay-straight alliances, for example, must form part of the school community.

These schools should not be exclusive to indigenous students. Children from all backgrounds, whether first-generation, fourth-generation, or one-hundredth-generation Canadians, should all be learning together about relationships to land, to each other, and receiving the very best valued-added education.

Canadians should celebrate this idea. We are a nation forged on partnership between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, who once enjoyed learning from one another. Where has that gone?

People may argue about why this shouldn't happen. They'll argue about who pays. They may cry reverse racism.

Good.

My idea intends to amplify conversations indigenous parents whisper across the land. This is our nation's great unfinished business and Canada has to stop being cowardly about it. We can disagree about how, why, what, and who, but our children cannot afford the disregard they're currently receiving. This isn't a matter of if, but when.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/canadas-cities-need-a-school-system-focused-on-first-nations/article23023662/>

Mandatory course in indigenous culture promotes tolerance

By: Frank Deer

- Posted: 02/19/2015 3:00 AM

History is important. Not just for the sake of filling some time in school. Not just for giving historians something to do. It's important for us all in our shared journey of discovering moral truth in our world. Knowing events of the past can guide, inspire, and give us pause to consider and reconsider how we think, feel and act.

Perhaps most important for me is how history allows me to better understand the people with whom I share this world. As Benjamin Disraeli once intimated, history is principally biography -- it is the stories of people.

Canada is, broadly speaking, a transcultural society. The merging and melding of histories, traditions and worldviews of people from around the world are lending to the development of a Canada that is, essentially, transcultural. Some communities may believe they are culturally homogenous, but immigration, foreign workers, social media and other factors have brought the presence of other peoples' ethno-cultural backgrounds into our lives in a multitude of ways.

We may hide from this phenomenon. We may even resent it. But this is the society in which we co-exist. A significant part of Canadian society is our First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Recently, the University of Winnipeg Students' Association circulated a letter stating their desire for a new campus-wide requirement for all undergraduate students in order to graduate, namely the successful completion of one course (three credit hours) with a focus on indigenous content. Indigenous history, culture and experience were the principal referents in the UWSA statement.

The University of Winnipeg has strived to be inclusive of the Canadian indigenous experience. There are benefits for us all with this sort of institutional initiative. It has increased the entry to and successful completion of university programs by indigenous peoples; campuses may be sites of mutual understanding and appreciation amongst all students; and, successful university experiences for indigenous students may lead to increased participation in the labour market.

But there is a more fundamental issue that may merit discussion. The University of Winnipeg is home to a growing number of indigenous students, but that is one portion of their undergraduate student population. So one may ask: Would an indigenous-content requirement be relevant for all students regardless of their respective ancestries?

This is where the UWSA statement may lead to valuable discussion. The UWSA cites "commitment to increasing access to post-secondary education for indigenous learners." As noble as this commitment may be, the intent of the UWSA statement may be understood as a benefit for all students. We need equality in our learning experiences, but little of the Canadian indigenous experience has been a part of the history made available to us compared to that of non-indigenous peoples. We need balanced public consciousness, yet indigenous issues are too frequently fraught with tension, despair and resentment. And initiatives such as the one suggested by UWSA would help us to live harmoniously, with mutual recognition across cultural groups.

Making this course required of students will not end racist attitudes, but it may rightfully be seen as a means of affecting the transcultural dialogue amongst Manitobans. Not only can this be one of the few developments that have affected public discourse in this area, but in professional areas such as education, social work, health and law, the potential benefits may be crucial.

When I first entered university 20 years ago, initiatives such as this in a large university were unheard of. The UWSA should be applauded for their initiative. After all, the Canadian indigenous experience is a part of our shared history.

Frank Deer is an assistant professor and director of indigenous initiatives in the faculty of education at the University of Manitoba.

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Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/mandatory-course-in-indigenous-culture-promotes-tolerance-292578591.html>

Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ont., to mandate indigenous learning

All Lakehead students required to learn about indigenous peoples, starting in 2016

[**CBC News**](#)

Posted:Feb 20, 2015 6:00 AM ET

Last Updated:Feb 20, 2015 7:15 AM ET

Lakehead University is moving to make it mandatory for all undergraduate students to take indigenous education.

Starting in 2016, studies about indigenous people and issues will be incorporated into courses in every faculty on campus.



Yolanda Wanakamik with the office of aboriginal initiatives at Lakehead calls the move to make indigenous studies mandatory, unique. (supplied)

Yolanda Wanakamik, co-ordinator of graduate and external relations with the office of aboriginal initiatives, said it's part of the university's over all strategic plan.

"The idea is that any student in an undergraduate program will graduate from Lakehead with one half credit having significant indigenous knowledge," Wanakamik said.

Teaching tailored to each student

The teaching will reflect a student's area of study. For example, Wanakamik explained, "in natural resource management at Lakehead you will have a lot of foresters graduating that are going to have to engage First Nations communities, so they will need to understand what treaties are."

Wanakamik pointed to graduating engineers as well, who need to go north and would have to learn about where they are going and the culture of First Nations.

Beyond raising understanding of indigenous people, Wanakamik said the intent of making these kind of studies mandatory is to talk openly about the issue of racism.

"There will be conversations in the classroom. Most people will be talking about stereotypes people have about indigenous people in northwestern Ontario, in fact across Canada," she said.

Wanakamik called the move towards mandatory indigenous education unique, with Lakehead in her estimation being the only Canadian university that has done this, so far.

As a former aboriginal student at Lakehead herself, Wanakamik said she's proud of what the university is doing.

"People have responded to it. People are excited. This is a boost for students."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/m/touch/canada/thunderbay/story/1.2963546>

Would boarding schools improve First Nations education?

Wednesday February 18, 2015



Survivors of St. Michael's Indian Residential School gathered to witness the school's demolition in Alert Bay, B.C. on February 18. (Reconciliation Canada/Facebook)

For decades, Canada's First Nations have been dealing with the fallout of residential schools. But now, educator Waubageshig (Harvey McCue) says it's time to consider taking children off reserves, and sending them to boarding schools. He says the problems created by residential schools mean some students are not getting the care and education they need at home-- but a boarding school with well-trained staff and an appropriate curriculum could solve that.

Waubageshig has worked in First Nations education since 1969, and says there are still many things wrong with it, including: curriculum, teacher training, a lack of traditional culture, and the conditions in which many students live. He says some students live in "toxic environments," and need to be cared for. Boarding schools would get them out of crowded homes, away from the threat of abuse, and access to nutritious food.

He admits, in some cases, children would need to be removed from their homes and sent to boarding school-- just like past generations, but says that's just what must be done: "I'm troubled to have to refer to that model, but I'm more troubled by the knowledge that a lot of these kids...need protection, they need love, they need better living conditions."

Why not just fix the existing problems in the system? Waubageshig says he's in favour, but right now he just doesn't see the will-- from professionals or from government, First Nations included. And even if there is an appetite to make changes, it will take time.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/the180/boarding-schools-for-first-nations-students-gender-neutral-washrooms-and-getting-rid-of-food-banks-1.2962111/would-boarding-schools-improve-first-nations-education-1.2962338>

Aboriginal Health

The intergenerational trauma of First Nations still runs deep

KEVIN BERUBE

Special to The Globe and Mail

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Imagine a knock on your door. You open it and are met by strangers accompanied by a police officer. These people are speaking a different language so you don't understand what they're saying. Eventually, you come to the surreal realization that they've come for your children. There is some time given to pack clothes and say goodbye. Any resistance is met with the threat of arrest by the police. You're not sure where your children are going or if you will ever see them again. You're wondering what you did wrong. You have no idea what is happening as you helplessly watch this nightmare unfold before your eyes.

How does an event like this affect the child? The parents? The community?

This sounds like something that happened long ago, somewhere far away, but this was the reality only a half-century ago with the residential-school education project across Canada and the Sixties Scoop – the “scooping up” of First Nations children by the plane-load for adoption, under the guise of protection, unbeknownst to their family and community across North America and Europe.

Can communities simply learn to move on, or will these two remarkable events in Canadian history reverberate through future generations – and for how long?

Many years after the last residential school closed its doors and most of the First Nations children taken from their homes through child welfare removal were returned, these events continue to have an impact on individuals, families and communities.

Intergenerational trauma, or transgenerational trauma, is what happens when untreated trauma-related stress experienced by survivors is passed on to second and subsequent generations. The trauma inflicted by residential schools and the Sixties Scoop was significant, and the scope of the damage these events wrought wouldn't be truly understood until years later.

Intergenerational trauma is usually seen within one family in which the parents or grandparents were traumatized, and each generation of that family continues to experience trauma in some form. In these cases the source can usually be traced back to a devastating event, and the trauma is unique to that family.

What makes the intergenerational trauma in the case of First Nations people different is that it wasn't the result of a targeted event against an individual – it was a set of government policies that targeted and affected a whole generation. Children were traumatized when they were taken from their parents and placed into either government-funded, church-controlled, residential learning institutions or into foster homes. Many children suffered horrific abuse while in these homes and institutions. And parents and communities were traumatized when their children were taken away from them with little or no idea if or when they would return.

Direct survivors of these experiences often transmit the trauma they experienced to later generations when they don't recognize or have the opportunity to address their issues. Over the course of time these behaviours, often destructive, become normalized within the family and their community, leading to the next generation suffering the same problems.

Many self-destructive behaviours can result from unresolved trauma. Depression, anxiety, family violence, suicidal and homicidal thoughts and addictions are some of the behaviours our mental health therapists see when working with clients who have experienced direct or intergenerational trauma. In most cases, the self-destructive behaviour exists because the client is having a difficult time dealing with the pain of remembering the past, or trying to survive an abusive situation now.

Talking with a mental-health therapist can help break the cycle of trauma. Family therapy may also be required to prevent behaviours continuing among the younger generation. The goals of the therapeutic relationship are to acknowledge the negative behaviour; help the individual and their family make the connection between the behaviour and the historical trauma; introduce healthy alternatives and coping mechanisms; and provide support and feedback to the individual and family as they carry on with their lives.

People reaching out for help may seek the support of traditional healers to assist them on their healing journey. Traditional healing, along with conventional therapeutic methods, have been effective tools in addressing intergenerational trauma. We must always be mindful to put the individual at the centre of the healing plan, critical not just in working with trauma survivors, but in the development of any patient plan that is going to yield the best outcomes. We need to recognize that patients know themselves better than anyone, and services should work together to consider their holistic needs.

Health Advisor contributors share their knowledge in fields ranging from fitness to psychology, pediatrics to aging.

Kevin Berube is director of the Mental Health and Addictions Program at the Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre, which provides health services to 30 First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario. A band member of Flying Post First Nation, he has more than 20 years of experience in child welfare, mental health and addictions working with First Nations communities.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health-advisor/the-intergenerational-trauma-of-first-nations-still-runs-deep/article23013789/>

Saskatoon chef Ryan Young creates diabetic-friendly menu

Wanuskewin Restaurant chef knows challenges of living with diabetes firsthand

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 16, 2015 6:46 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 16, 2015 12:52 PM CT

Ryan Young is going beyond vegetarian dishes or gluten-free options. The Saskatoon chef is creating a diabetic-friendly menu at the Wanuskewin Restaurant.

The changes are personal for Young. He was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when he was two years old.

Now 37, Young is slowly trying to educate his staff and customers about the best way to eat if you are diabetic or trying to avoid becoming diabetic.

The Wanuskewin Restaurant prides itself on making First Nations delicacies from scratch such as baked bannock, bison stew and muskeg tea.

Young is using local and regional ingredients to make these meals, but is slowly changing the menu to make portion sizes smaller and incorporating more unrefined sugar.

Young also sent CBC Saskatoon a recipe for braised rabbit.

Rabbit Braised in Muskeg Tea

1 whole rabbit or cut into segments

1 medium onion

4 cloves of garlic

2 medium carrots

4 stalks celery

3-4 cups brewed Muskeg Tea

Salt and pepper to taste

If you are using a whole rabbit trim it of the remaining fat and cut into equal parts. You will have the saddle, or the rib cage, cut in to 2 pieces, the hind legs and the front legs. Lightly season with salt and pepper. Heat a pan with a couple tablespoons of olive oil. Get the pan nice and hot and quickly sear the meat on all sides. Once the meat is nice and golden brown, place in a roasting pan large enough so the rabbit isn't cramped. Roughly chop up your onion, carrot and celery and toss in with the rabbit. Add the garlic and Muskeg Tea and cover tightly as to not let the moisture out. Braise slowly at 350 degrees for around 1 to 2 hours depending on the size of the rabbit. Once cooked, remove the meat and let cool. Place the tea, cooked veg in a pot and add 4 cups of chicken stock. Let simmer. Once reduced and flavourful puree the veg with either a hand blender or in a food processor. Return to heat. Once meat is cooled remove from bone. Add meat to liquid and simmer. If desired, slowly thicken with cornstarch to make a nice hearty stew.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/saskatoon-chef-ryan-young-creates-diabetic-friendly-menu-1.2958328>

Ontario's only Inuit-specific clinic a model of patient-centred care

"Had she not come in here, she would have died"

LISA GREGOIRE

February 16, 2015 - 5:55 am



Connie Siedule, executive director of the Akausivik Inuit Family Health Team in Ottawa, says the goal of the clinic is to help Inuit understand their health issues and a complex healthcare system. (PHOTO BY LISA GREGOIRE)

OTTAWA — Connie Siedule, executive director of Ottawa's Akausivik Inuit family health clinic, keeps track of what she calls "saves."

Like the woman who visited the clinic just to register as a patient and leave. She was in the last trimester of her pregnancy, detoxing from addiction and she looked unwell.

When Akausivik doctors examined her, they discovered her baby was in severe distress.

“It wouldn’t have ended well,” Siedule said Feb. 12, sitting in a meeting room of the Vanier-area clinic. “We bypassed emergency and went right into maternity.”

Then there was the woman who had gone to a hospital emergency room in Ottawa with severe abdominal pain but couldn’t explain her symptoms well in English.

Emergency staff sent her home but her discomfort continued. She decided to go to Akausivik.

Akausivik doctors diagnosed her with an ectopic pregnancy — a fetus growing inside a fallopian tube. If left untreated, this can be a potentially life-threatening condition.

Akausivik doctors called the hospital emergency staff to let them know the woman was coming back and gave her a letter explaining the problem so she could hand that to the triage nurses on arrival.

“Had she not come in here, she would have died,” Siedule says plainly. “That was a total save.”

Before the Akausivik Inuit Family Health Team clinic started providing a one-stop shop for Inuit healthcare in Ottawa in 2011, most Inuit patients would just go straight to emergency if they had a problem.

But often, by the time they got there, small problems had bloomed into complex ones, leading to hospital admission and extensive care.

Now, when they register at Akausivik, a case manager-interpreter sits down with them, asks a lot of questions about their past and current life, and tries to unravel what is often a tangled mess of physical and mental issues.

And they can speak Inuktitut if they want.

The clinic, near enough to Montreal Road in Ottawa’s Vanier neighbourhood to be accessible for many Inuit who live there but discreetly distant from the bars and street life, is modern, welcoming and brimming with Inuit artwork.

Funded through the Ontario Ministry of Health Long Term Care program, Akausivik operates on an annual budget of about \$1.4 million.

Doctors are paid a salary, not fee-for-service, so they can take as much time as they need with each patient. Sometimes a 15-minute appointment turns into an hour and a half.

Since the clinic opened nearly four years ago, Akausivik has logged more than 78,000 patient visits and currently maintains a registry of more than 3,232 patients.

Ontario is home to more than 200 of these holistic, family health clinics, five of which are Aboriginal-specific. This is the only Inuit one, Siedule said.

An estimated 1,800 Inuit now live in Ottawa, according to the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre.

In the beginning, the clinic was under the umbrella of Ottawa's Tungasuvvingat Inuit community health centre but on Jan. 1, 2015, Akausivik celebrated a rebirth by becoming an independent body led by a five-member volunteer board of directors.

Those five directors include the original three — Sally Webster, Rhoda Innuksuk and Mary Simon — and two new additions: Looee Okalik and Richmond Green. They held their inaugural meeting Jan. 9.

For Innuksuk, that meeting was the culmination of more than a decade's worth of perseverance, planning, struggle, hope, focus, grant-writing, setbacks and finally, success.

"I'm very proud of the work they do there. It's an incredible team," said Innuksuk, an oral history researcher with Nunavut's culture and heritage department in Igloolik.

"I'm still in awe but looking forward to continuing to improve the health and treatment of Inuit."

Simon was also buoyed by the clinic's long-time-coming incorporation.

"I would like to congratulate the Inuit of Ottawa for this achievement," texted Simon, who was on the road Feb. 12.

"As soon as people come in the door, they know they are in an Inuit health centre and are greeted in their own language: Inuktitut. I want to recognize the continued support of the Ontario government for Inuit to have their own healthcare centre."

Siedule said in the years leading up to the 2011 Akausivik opening, they offered band-aid health care solutions for Inuit whenever possible.

In 2009 for example, during the flu pandemic, Siedule said they managed to convince Dr. Indu Gambhir— with only a promise of future payment — to set up a flu clinic for Inuit who, according to statistics, were 14 times more likely than average Canadians to suffer complications, or be hospitalized, because of influenza.

“We set up three lawn chairs in the basement of Tungasuvvingat Inuit, put up a bookshelf to provide a little privacy for patients,” said Siedule, laughing. “We had to borrow thermometers and other equipment.”

Akausivik now employs five part-time physicians, including Dr. Gambhir, registered nurses, and case managers who identify ways the clinic can help patients, or external services to which they can be referred.

They also have affiliated specialists — a pediatrician, a psychiatrist, and a dental hygienist, for instance — who come in when needed.

Siedule is trained in traditional Chinese medicine so she offers acupuncture treatments for stress, addictions, pain, depression and other problems.

The clinic also does outreach work. A nurse and case manager visit the city’s homeless shelters weekly, Siedule said, to try to meet the needs of at-risk patients.

Sometimes they meet patients who have been kicked out of the Larga Baffin patient home because of drinking or drugs. Sometimes they meet people straight off the plane from Iqaluit.

If anyone needs care right away, staff will accompany them back to Akausivik, or to hospital if necessary.

“We have a number of patients who are open about their addictions and they feel comfortable coming here,” said Dr. Anne Duggan, Akausivik’s acting senior physician. “When they’re ready to deal with it, we’re here to help them.”

It’s sad to think Inuit might be better served at the Akausivik clinic than at some community health stations in the North, Innuksuk said.

“We hope northern clinics might pattern their care after our model here in Ottawa,” Innuksuk said. “In the North, you can’t insist on anything to the nurses or you could get accused of being abusive or uncooperative.

“But Inuit have special needs,” she said. “We need to design programs in the North that are geared toward those special needs.”

Siedule said Akausivik staff make an effort to see the person behind the problem — the abuse they may have suffered, the untreated trauma, the depression.

“People say it feels like home here,” she said, “which is kind of strange for a clinic, when you think about it.”

Direct Link: http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674ontarios_only_inuit-specific_clinic_a_model_of_patient-centred_care/

Aboriginal History

'We were lost between 2 worlds,' survivor of Canada aboriginal kids' adoption tells RT

Published time: February 13, 2015 18:58

US national swimming champion Wayne Snellgrove, one of the victims of Canada's so-called "Scoop" program, an adoption scheme through which Aboriginal Canadian children were placed with white families, has told RT it stripped survivors of their identities.

"They're lost between two worlds, they're not part of the native culture and they don't assimilate well with the white culture. They've lost their identity and it's a really sad thing," Snellgrove told RT about the thousands of kids who were taken from their homes from the 1960s to the 1980s, of which he was one.

Snellgrove himself was taken from his Saskatchewan mother at birth in the 1970s, and spent the first few years of his life in the care of the Canadian government. He was eventually adopted by a white family in the United States, and did not meet his birth mother until he was 32.

"I realized I had been in mourning my entire life and didn't even know it," he told RT of the adoption.

Snellgrove also recounted some the fraught historical context for the misguided and damaging adoption policy.

"They [white European settlers] have a very dark history of the way they treated the Aboriginal population. They tortured, they killed them, they murdered them, they raped them. All these stories are part of my story they're part of my culture."

The swimming champ recalled feeling out of place and lost with his American family. Though Snellgrove says he was placed into a loving home and that his adoptive parents tried their best to raise him, he was still plagued by depression and could not assimilate into white culture.

"They gave me every opportunity, but the thing is I'm not white. I did not assimilate well into white culture... There were still feelings of loss and abandonment as to why I was with the family I was with," he said.

Though Snellgrove got the chance to meet his mother after hiring a private investigator and searching for her for seven years, he says that others are not so lucky.

“There were hundreds of kids taken from my reserve, hundreds of kids taken across Canada – thousands of kids. And from my reserve I was the third one to make it back – the third one ever to touch my ancestral lands again,” he told RT.

Many of these children are now seeking reparations from the Canadian government. More than 1,800 people have signed onto a class action suit lawsuit. The plaintiffs are being represented by the Merchant Law Group, which served the federal government with the suit in late January.

Tony Merchant, the head legal counsel at Merchant, claims that children suffered physical, psychological and sexual abuse as a result of the program. He criticized it as a misguided paternalistic attempt at assimilating Aboriginal Canadian children.

“It was part of the paternalistic approach, that if we could get children out of the hands of Aboriginal people, we could give them a better life in the future by taking away their culture and turning red children into white adults,” he was quoted as saying by CBC.

Direct Link: <http://rt.com/news/232227-aboriginal-adoption-canada-snellgrove/>

Where is the monument to Aboriginal Peoples?

[Patrick Butler](#)

Published on February 16, 2015

Here in Ottawa, the feds have planned a new Memorial to the Victims of Communism with construction to begin later this year. Should things proceed as planned, it'll end up in the heart of the national capital on a 5,000-square-metre patch of grass between the Supreme Court and Library and Archives Canada.

The thing is, not everyone is pleased about the new monument.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin recently criticized the memorial design's "bleak and brutal" style.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson called the \$5.5-million monument "overwhelming" and a blight on the Supreme Court precinct.

Others, such as Ottawa-Centre MP Paul Dewar, have called on the government to move it to a different location.

I can't argue with any of them. The monument plans are big — really big — and it strikes the wrong chord next to the Supreme Court, a symbol of Canadian justice and freedom, which shouldn't be overshadowed.

More importantly, although communism may be the reason many Canadians and their parents and grandparents moved to this country, it isn't really a struggle native to Canada.

Communism was never a serious threat to Canadian democracy and putting the memorial in such a prominent location — alongside the court and just down the street from Parliament — gives it a false importance within Canada's historical narrative.

A memorial to the victims of communism isn't a bad idea by any means, but a space so near the cores of Canadian justice and democracy should be reserved for something at the heart of Canada's history.

Canada's capital has lots of statues and cenotaphs— the National War Memorial, the Peacekeeping Monument, the Royal Canadian Navy Monument.

But there's one gaping hole in Ottawa's catalogue of memorials and monuments, one overwhelming omission that has yet to be recognized by the government and that could quite rightly take over such a prominent space in the national capital: a national monument to Canada's Aboriginal Peoples.

Canada has an embarrassing history of racism and discrimination when it comes to indigenous peoples. The country's treatment of its Aboriginal Peoples is perhaps the most horrible, jarring stain on its history.

Since colonization, Canada's indigenous peoples have suffered strife and segregation at the hands of settlers.

European diseases decimated indigenous populations during the first centuries after Columbus, as virgin soil epidemics ravaged communities whose inhabitants hadn't developed the same antibodies as settlers.

Colonizers drove Aboriginal Peoples off their lands and away from their traditional hunting and fishing grounds.

Later, residential schools left families broken, and assimilated cultures, languages and religious practices. Successive governments segregated the country into separate racial groups and cemented their imposed racial hierarchy with legislation like the Indian Act.

In places like Newfoundland, entire populations of indigenous people disappeared from the map.

Today, aboriginal Canadians continue to struggle with the problems that took root centuries ago during colonialism — from addiction to prejudice.

Still, Ottawa's only national memorial to indigenous peoples is a statue in Confederation Park dedicated to aboriginal war veterans.

For everything Canada's Aboriginal Peoples have endured, for all the malice they have been subjected to, all the racial prejudice they have been dealt, there is nothing on the scale of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism dedicated to them.

The Canadian government keeps looking outwards for new memorials — to communism, to the Holocaust — when the monument it most desperately needs to build is for the people who were, and are, suffering right under its nose.

Direct Link: <http://www.thetelegram.com/Opinion/Columnists/2015-02-16/article-4044653/Where-is-the-monument-to-Aboriginal-Peoples%3F/1>

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Riel Day must become meaningful

By: Editorial

Posted: 02/14/2015 3:00 AM



In 2008, the province declared the third Monday of February Louis Riel Day, an official holiday that was supposed "to celebrate Riel's vision." In fact, it has been mostly just another long weekend with little attention paid to the story of the Métis, who were fundamental to the creation of Manitoba in 1870.

Since the holiday was declared, however, events have unfolded that demand a more meaningful effort to understand the Métis and aboriginal peoples.

The Louis Riel holiday should become a weekend event dedicated to education and understanding. The Festival du Voyageur, which occurs at the same time, is a natural complement for an exercise in reconciliation.

Let's take a few steps back.

Maclean's magazine shook up the community recently with an article that documented in painful detail the city's prejudice against aboriginal people. Of course, it's nearly impossible to find anyone who admits to disliking indigenous people -- who, me? -- and equally difficult to find an aboriginal person who has not experienced racism personally.

Other minorities also feel the sting of racism, but the divide between aboriginals and the rest of us is palpable.

It is almost a new version of Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, where "two old races... live their separate legends, side by side."

The Conference Board of Canada released a report this week that ranked the health of Manitobans near the bottom in Canada. The report said "poorer health outcomes among aboriginal populations" might be a contributing factor to the province's low performance.

The observation was almost gratuitous, since Manitobans are well-aware aboriginal populations rank at the bottom of every quality-of-life index, while leading the charts on rates of incarceration, chronic disease and substance abuse. The story of residential schools needs no introduction.

Every so often, aboriginal groups will block a rail line, stage a protest or boycott a meeting with a cabinet minister to make a point, but not much seems to change. Several generations of well-meaning Canadians have been wringing their hands with good intentions, yet slop pails are still in use in some First Nations communities.

This was not Louis Riel's vision for the future. He was an advocate of minority and language rights, including a provision that English and French languages "be common in the legislature and in the courts, and that all public documents, as well as acts of the legislature be published in both languages."

Riel was far from perfect -- he has been called corrupt and insane -- but he represented a culture that respected equally white and aboriginal people.

In fact, it's this multicultural heritage that led philosopher John Ralston Saul to describe Canada metaphorically as a "Métis nation." The tragedy of Canadian history, Saul says, is our collective denial that aboriginal people were indispensable to the creation of Canada.

"The single greatest failure of the Canadian experiment, so far, has been our inability to normalize -- that is, to internalize consciously -- the First Nations as the senior founding pillar of our civilization," he said.

Canada's challenge is to reverse this trend. In Winnipeg's case, however, the case for reconciliation and a new appreciation of history is even more urgent.

That's because the city is home to Canada's largest aboriginal population on a per capita basis. Without a thriving aboriginal community, Winnipeg will face a daunting struggle for social harmony, all of it under the shadow of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

America's Martin Luther King Jr. Day, celebrated on the third Monday of January, is held concurrently with conferences on the civil rights movement. Louis Riel Day deserves the same gravitas to help break down Canada's most tragic two solitudes.

Editorials are the consensus view of the Winnipeg Free Press' editorial board, comprising Catherine Mitchell, David O'Brien, Shannon Sampert, and Paul Samyn.

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Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/editorials/riel-day-must-become-meaningful-291944781.html>

First Nations people continue to deal with racism daily

posted Feb 17, 2015 at 8:00 AM

Erin Haluschak

Record Staff

I'tustolagalis – Rising Up, Together: *St. Michael's Residential School in Alert Bay, B.C. — one of five remaining residential schools in the province — is slated for demolition later this year. This is the second of a three-part February series looking further into the stories of the students, challenges faced by local First Nations in the Comox Valley today, and a special mid-month ceremony at the school to acknowledge the past and ignite hope for the future.*

Part of Evelyn Voyageur's weekly routine is going for a swim at the pool in Courtenay.

What is also becoming routine are the seemingly innocuous comments she hears on a regular basis.

“There goes that warrior woman,” says one woman who passes her by.

Voyageur hears the words, but tries to not let them hurt her.

“Racism is good and alive.”

It’s been 10 years since she moved to the Comox Valley and decades since she attended St. Michael’s Residential School, but while the school system no longer exists, the derogatory words and comments directed towards First Nations people continues.

“It still exists, even though many think it doesn’t, it does,” she notes.

She recalls stories of her daughter and grandson dealing with racism, yet Voyageur remains optimistic. She believes people have the ability to change, telling her daughter it’s a lack of knowledge for those who tell her that her son won’t do as well in school because he’s aboriginal.

“It’s really about educating people. As long as people are open to that, education will help,” she concedes.

• • •

In a small room across the Valley in Comox, surrounded by his peers, Andrew Jütte says his skin colour looks like he’s really tanned, but not aboriginal.

On a recent university application, he didn’t declare his First Nation status, rather, indicating he is Caucasian.

“It’s one of those things, you’ve got to pick your battles.”

As a Grade 12 student, Jütte eloquently speaks about racism and shares stories — along with other Highland Secondary Students — with the wisdom of someone twice his age. Those around him do the same.

The students in the room are part of the school’s Aboriginal Student Council — the first ever in Canadian schools. Aboriginal and non-aboriginal students created the council five years ago to share stories, support each other, educate their peers and bring awareness to First Nations issues both within the walls of their school and the larger community.

It’s a place of respect, added Josie Andrew, the aboriginal home support worker for the school, who also attended the Christie (Kakawis) Indian Residential School near Tofino.

“These are some very strong role models. We have 95 students of aboriginal ancestry and there’s a cultural pride. We have to break that stereotype of what an aboriginal looks like and what they do,” she notes. “I take my hat off to these kids. The biggest thing is that they look out for each other.”

The students share their own experiences, using each interaction as an opportunity to rise above racism.

Ashley Taylor recalls when she told her fellow friends in cadets she was aboriginal, “their jaws dropped to the floor. You don’t have to be brown — don’t judge a book by its cover.”

Cub Scout leader Billie Heinpalu says when one parent discovered she was aboriginal, she didn’t want her child to join, telling Heinpalu she would grow up to be a child molester because she’s First Nations and enjoys working with children.

“I still think about that; I think about what the other parents think of me. It really hurts.”

Jütte explains this is how the council can really help, allowing people to share their experiences with the same problem.

“You have a choice. You can let it sting and bother you, or you can choose to bury the hatchet and keep walking forward. For problems to get solved, you have to talk about it, you don’t have to face it alone.”

While the group began solely with First Nations students, any member of the student population is welcome to join.

International student Jade Cook joined the council, coming from South Africa, to learn more about aboriginal culture and traditions. She’s aware of the measurable racism in her home country, but never realized the prevailing racism across the world.

“It’s really a medieval mindset that someone thinks they are better than someone else. It’s really sad,” she notes. “It’s everywhere. We really need to educate the younger generation.”

While she truly believes racism against First Nations is improving, Andrew agrees with the students that education is the answer.

“For a lot of people, everything they learn about aboriginals is around the kitchen table. We go into the classrooms and do presentations on residential schools, and students are shocked to learn that the last one closed in their lifetime,” she says. “If you can affect one person through education, then it’s worth it.”

Direct Link: <http://www.comoxvalleyrecord.com/news/292220851.html>

Aboriginal support group offers help to 'two-spirit' people



The aboriginal health centre in Sudbury is encouraging indigenous people who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender to join a sharing circle.

Perry McLeod-Shabogesic, the director of traditional programming at Shkagamik-kwe health centre, said the Two Spirit Circle is open to all, including Cree, Anishnabek, and Metis people.

The term two-spirited covers those who identify at different points of the sexual identity scale. Prior to European contact, two spirited people were seen as essential members of a diverse village, McLeod-Shabogesic said, and they have special gifts.

“One of them was this ability — this duality — that they could see from two perspectives. So they were often used in ways of counselling, bridging that difference between the male and the female perspective on things.”

So far four or five people regularly participate in the sharing circle, but McLeod-Shabogesic said he believes there are others out there who need support.

The group offers both traditional and Western views to support lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender indigenous people.

Two-spirited people face the double challenge of racism and homophobia, he noted.

“We are talking Sudbury here. It's not San Francisco. Some of the struggles are little heavier in a northern Ontario town for someone from the LGBT community.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/aboriginal-support-group-offers-help-to-two-spirit-people-1.2963693>

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

Aboriginal trades get \$3M in federal funds

The Leader-Post February 14, 2015

Federal funding of \$3.1 million will go toward helping train 150 new aboriginal apprentices in the trades.

The Gabriel Dumont Institute Training and Employment centre will help train the apprentices in trades experiencing a shortage of skilled workers, as identified by local industry and the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission.

Trades include boilermakers, bricklayers, construction craft labourers, ironworkers, machinists, automotive technicians, powerline technicians, electricians and plumbers.

"The new funding will enable us to partner with businesses across Saskatchewan to take on more aboriginal apprentices who will have opportunities to acquire marketable skills and get wellpaying jobs; and the province will be able to reduce its skilled labour shortage," said Gabriel Dumont's vice-chair, Glenn Lafleur, in a news release.

In January 2014, Employment and Social Development Canada reported the overall unemployment rate in Saskatchewan was 3.9 per cent, while the unemployment rate within the province's aboriginal population was 10.9 per cent.

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/business/Aboriginal+trades+federal+funds/10813965/story.html>

Trades Alberta: Training program gives boost to tradespeople on First Nations communities

By Cailynn Klingbeil, Edmonton Journal February 18, 2015 1:43 Pm



Warren Kootenay, the Aboriginal Initiatives Coordinator at CLAC union, poses for a photo on Feb. 11, 2015 in one of the training areas used to prepare many of his students for the workplace.

EDMONTON - A partnership that taps into Alberta's aboriginal workforce is helping young people get the training they need to find and keep steady employment in the trades.

"I saw a door open and I needed to go there," says Curtis Lupaschuk, 28, a member of the Whitefish Lake First Nation who entered the Pre-Employment Construction and Pre-Employment Scaffold Training Program in his community in April 2013.

The program is an initiative of union CLAC, in partnership with industry, First Nations and funding from the provincial government. Participants — mostly in their 20s and 30s — receive life skills and job readiness training, nine safety tickets, and theory and practical work in construction and scaffolding over 14 to 16 weeks.

"We want to make sure they're ready to go," said Warren Kootenay, CLAC's Aboriginal Initiatives Coordinator.

When Lupashuk applied for and was accepted into the program on Whitefish Lake First Nation, he was unemployed and about to become a father.

"A buddy told me about the program and said it was a big success for a lot of people," Lupaschuk said of his reason for applying.

Since graduating from the program, he's found steady employment as a scaffolder with Cornerstone Scaffolding & Insulation.

"I make temporary work platforms for other trades, so they can get up to where they need to be," Lupaschuk said. "Every day is a new challenge. I'm learning every day."

More young people will get the opportunities available to Lupashuk and others this March, when the program comes to the community of Whitefish Lake First Nation, located two hours northeast of Edmonton, for the fourth time. It was first offered in December 2012, with 40 people applying for just 12 spots.

During the program, industry, instructors and funding partners are invited together to discuss what's working and what's not.

"It's cooperative. We communicate and work together," Kootenay said. "That's key to the success."

The program has also been offered on other Alberta First Nations, including Saddle Lake, Fort McKay, and Louis Bull First Nations.

While participants travel to the Edmonton CLAC office for some training, organizers try as much as they can to deliver training in the community.

Efforts are also made to make the program visible. Community members are invited and encouraged to drop in and see first-hand what the training is all about, Kootenay said.

The program emphasizes more than just training. Focus is also put on meeting a company's job entry requirements, Kootenay said, including drug and alcohol testing. Once the training program ends, graduates who meet requirements begin job placements with industry partners.

For Kootenay, that's where the real reward of his work comes.

"At the end of the day, I get to see people working and lives changed," he said. "I love my job."

Direct Link:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/business/tradesalberta/Training+program+gives+boost+tradespeople/10823666/story.html>

Aboriginal Politics

Metis Nation endangered: president

By Betty Ann Adam, The Starphoenix February 13, 2015



Metis Nation - Saskatchewan president Robert Doucette.

The Metis Nation-Saskatchewan (MNS) has scheduled a legislative assembly for September, but president Robert Doucette says that delay may kill the organization, which represents about 100,000 Saskatchewan people of Metis ancestry.

The MNS has been without federal funding since Oct. 31 and won't get any more until it holds an assembly, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt has told the MNS.

Doucette said Thursday the organization has had to lay off staff, leaving it unable to continue with projects large and small.

About 20 people who used to work on a massive, federally funded project to register Metis citizens based on ties to historical settlements have been laid off, leaving one person who tries to help hunters accused of poaching prove they are entitled to the Metis' constitutional right to harvest wildlife.

"We're going to lose him at the end of March. Metis people are going to be on the road to fend for themselves when we had a good process to help them," Doucette said.

A project to obtain a provincewide clearance for Metis to hunt has also lost funding, Doucette said. Valcourt withdrew the funding after warning the MNS to hold a legislative assembly, which is the main opportunity for Metis people to exercise their democratic right to direct the organization. The last one was in 2010.

Doucette's political foe, MNS vice-president Gerald Morin, has the support of most of the 13-member Provincial Metis Council, which sets the date for the assembly.

That group has, until now, refused to set a date until Doucette complies with demands he produce various documents. Doucette insists he has complied and the information is all on the MNS website.

Morin said the audited financial statements on the website are insufficient, lacking information about an MNS holding company, rent, trust funds and the sale of a building.

"Of course I'm concerned. If we're going to have a legislative assembly, we need to have one where all the information is available," he said. "Why would you have an assembly with no information? ... It takes time to get that information."

Morin said the September meeting date will give the council time to prepare.

In October 2013, Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River MP Rob Clarke said the MNS needs to be more transparent and called on the minister of aboriginal affairs to investigate the organization.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/business/Metis+Nation+endangered+president/10810606/story.html>

Aboriginal Sports

Aboriginal hockey families complain about racism on ice

Hockey Regina says organization has zero tolerance for racism, but cannot substantiate claims

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 17, 2015 6:15 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 17, 2015 9:59 AM CT

Some First Nations families in Regina are complaining about racist taunts directed at their teenage hockey players.

Treena Amyotte filed a grievance in January about other players hurling slurs at her 14-year-old son.

"One kid will say something like, 'go back to the res,' or call them a 'dirty Indian' or something," Amyotte told CBC News.

"It happens more often than it should."

Aaron Desjarlais has also made two formal complaints. After striking an opposing player with a defensive hit, Desjarlais said, his son was subjected to insult, threat and even violence on the ice.

"He yelled at him and basically told him, 'I will kill you, you stupid Indian.'" - *Aaron Desjarlais*

“The player got upset, skated after him, came up behind him and cross-checked him,” said Desjarlais.

“As he was skating by him, he yelled at him and basically told him, ‘I will kill you, you stupid Indian.’”

In response, Desjarlais said Hockey Regina sent him an email stating the organization could not substantiate the claim.

Hockey Regina said it gets approximately five complaints a year alleging racism and there is zero tolerance for such behaviour.

However, Amyotte said she thinks five is an underestimation, as there are some who could be unwilling to speak up.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/aboriginal-hockey-families-complain-about-racism-on-ice-1.2959066>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

New sewage treatment plant at God’s Lake First Nation complete

[Ian Graham](#) / Thompson Citizen
February 12, 2015 08:57 AM

God’s Lake First Nation now has a new \$10.7 million sewage treatment plant that could eventually serve the homes of all of its 1,415 members living on reserve.

The construction was funded through Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada’s (AANDC) First Nations and Wastewater Action Plan.

“I am very pleased the government of Canada supported this important project,” said God’s Lake First Nation Chief Gilbert George Andrews in a government press release announcing the project’s completion. “This wastewater treatment facility will protect the environment of our community and improve the quality of life for all those living here. This is a positive step towards hooking up all of our homes to our sewage systems.”

The federal government says it invested approximately \$3 billion between 2006 and 2014 as part of a long-term plan to improve drinking water and sewer systems on First Nations lands. In 2014, the government committed \$323.4 million for water and wastewater

infrastructure in First Nations communities. The *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act*, intended to ensure drinking water and wastewater standards on First Nations are comparable to those in other Canadian communities, came into effect in November 2013.

“Our government is proud to provide funding for upgrades to God’s Lake First Nation water system so that community members can have the same access to safe and clean water that other Canadians enjoy,” said Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister Bernard Valcourt in the press release. “We recognize that improving water and wastewater systems on reserve is crucial to supporting healthy, self-sufficient and prosperous First Nation communities and this announcement is a clear demonstration of working with our partners to achieve this goal.”

God’s Lake First Nation is about 240 kilometres southeast of Thompson and accessible by air and winter road via provincial highway 373. The community has approximately 2,360 members, including the 1,415 living on reserve.

See more at: <http://www.thompsoncitizen.net/news/nickel-belt/new-sewage-treatment-plant-at-god-s-lake-first-nation-complete-1.1760814#sthash.f0VtLCJ2.dpuf>

Coastal First Nations Call Out 'Eagle Spirit' Pipeline

Energy project seen as Northern Gateway alternative rejected by two vital aboriginal alliances.

By [Sarah Berman](#), 13 Feb 2015, TheTyee.ca

After a Wednesday press conference in Calgary announced new partners in a First Nations-led pipeline project, two major alliances of First Nations have publicly rejected the proposal.

The Eagle Spirit Energy project, which positions itself as a less risky alternative to Enbridge's Northern Gateway, first [set out](#) to secure "social license" for a high-volume energy corridor through northern B.C. in September 2012. With financial backing from the Aquilini Group, president and chairperson Calvin Helin said his company consulted with First Nations and is in the process of designing a proposal that meets those terms.

"We learned First Nations do not want bitumen through the province, they do not want Kitimat as a port -- it's probably the worst place, they repeatedly told us -- they want a world-class environmental model, and they want fair reward for the risks they're taking," said Helin.

Two representatives from the Burns Lake Indian Band in Ts'il Kaz Koh territory and two hereditary chiefs from Gitxsan territories announced support for the project on

Wednesday morning. They join Stellat'en First Nation, which announced its public support last year. "First Nations that came out and signed a declaration today wanted to demonstrate they're open for business when standards are met," Helin said on Wednesday.

While Eagle Spirit's "consult first, design later" approach has been observed with interest by some First Nations, two large aboriginal alliances have come out against the project. The Yinka Dene Alliance and Coastal First Nations responded to the press event by affirming their members still oppose high-volume pipelines through their land and waterways.

"Literally no First Nation on the coast is in favour of Eagle Spirit," said Art Sterritt, executive director of Coastal First Nations. "It's a bit misleading for Eagle Spirit to hold a press conference in Calgary and announce things have changed in British Columbia, because they haven't."

Yinka Dene Alliance spokesperson Geraldine Thomas-Flurer said the six member nations have "not changed our position on oil transportation through our lands and waters."

Coastal First Nations members span from Rivers Inlet on B.C.'s central coast, up to the northernmost tip of Haida Gwaii. The Yinka Dene Alliance includes the Nadleh Whut'en, Nak'azdli, Takla Lake, Saik'uz, Wet'suwet'en and Tl'azt'en nations in B.C.'s central interior. Nak'azdli Chief Fred Sam said yesterday that he stands behind a letter he wrote to Calvin Helin, who hails from Lax Kw'alaams near Prince Rupert, in October 2014. The letter commends Eagle Spirit for seeking First Nations' approval, but rejects the proposal.

"I have heard you and David Negrin from the Aquilini Group state that your proposed pipeline will not proceed through a First Nation's lands unless you had consent from that First Nation," Chief Sam wrote. "Nak'azdli Band Council and our people will not give you the consent that you are seeking."

'Very speculative project': campaigner

Despite vocal opposition, Helin said the Eagle Spirit project has secured agreements with partners along 80 per cent of his company's route. "Art [Sterritt] doesn't speak for all of the North Coast," Helin said of the project's silent supporters. "All I can say is we have non-disclosure agreements and I can't comment."

Many details about the pipeline have not been made public and could remain sealed away in non-disclosure agreements for months or years to come. Without an official price tag, route, or refinery and port location, experts have yet to weigh in on the project's feasibility.

"It's a very speculative project," said Des Nobels, a commercial fisherman and environmental campaigner for T. Bucks Suzuki Foundation. "In terms of the end route,

yes it's a safer approach than many of the others being proposed, but I am loath to say one is better than the other."

Helin maintains First Nations' business sense will eventually win over critics. Partners will receive compensation "of a completely different order" than Enbridge's Northern Gateway, he said. Helin said top petroleum economists were consulted, but declined to disclose any financial information.

One First Nations opponent of the Enbridge project attended the Eagle Spirit press conference, but did not sign the declaration of support. Chief Martin Louie of the Nadleh Wut'en First Nation, a member of the Yinka Dene Alliance, said that First Nations-led projects like Eagle Spirit have earned his careful consideration, but not his support.

"I'm not going to agree to anything until I've done due diligence," Chief Louie said.

With oil-by-rail ramping up across the province, Louie said he is in conversation with other aboriginal leaders to create a unified way to address development. "We have to come up with a plan," he added. "We cannot just say no and not have a plan for something else to happen."

Sterritt said Eagle Spirit's consultations may have piqued the interest of leaders like Louie, but the project ultimately doesn't deliver acceptable terms. "They [Eagle Spirit] got through a few more doors than Enbridge did, but never got any more support than Enbridge."

Helin said Eagle Spirit is in the process of finalizing several agreements, and will be announcing new information within the next couple months.

Direct Link: <http://thetyee.ca/News/2015/02/13/Eagle-Spirit-Pipeline/>

Gogama crude oil spill worries nearby Mattagami First Nation

**Cleanup continues at the site of a CN train derailment northwest of
Gogama, Ont.**

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 19, 2015 8:51 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 19, 2015 11:46 AM ET



Derailed tank cars. (Transportation Safety Board)

Mattagami First Nation is sounding the alarm about a CN rail spill near the community.

The First Nation said Saturday's derailment involving 29 crude oil tankers occurred on its traditional territory, located 40 kilometres north of the community.

Ontario's Regional Chief Stan Beardy is advocating for the community to make sure the site is cleaned, as he's concerned about the spill causing environmental damage.



Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy. (Josh Lynn/CBC)

"It is their traditional territory. It's their homeland," he said.

"They still depend on that for their way of life. They still depend on the animals, the birds and the fish from that area. I'm very concerned that, if there's contamination to the natural environment, that it will affect the quality of the animals, birds and fish."

CN and other agencies have been on the scene cleaning up all week. They say the spill is contained, and the rail line is now open to other train traffic.

Information delayed?

The First Nation also wants to know why it wasn't contacted as soon as the train derailed nearby last Saturday.

Coun. Jennifer Constant said she had no idea there was a derailment near her community until she read about it on Facebook.

"We had to initiate contact to get any kind of information, which is a real concern to us considering we were the closest to the incident."

Constant said she got a call from CN on Tuesday — two days later.



Patrick Waldron, CN Public Affairs. (CN)

CN Public Affairs spokesperson Patrick Waldron said "repeated attempts were made to connect with the chief [and] CN has spoken with at least one councillor."

"CN's outreach to the Mattagami First Nation started Sunday morning and has been ongoing," he added.

But for Mattagami First Nation Chief Walter Naveau, the delay is unacceptable.

"It's big concern from the First Nations because of the environmental impacts of what could happen."

He said he plans to speak with the national chief about oil spill concerns.



Walter Naveau, chief of Mattagami First Nations. (Nicole Ireland/CBC)

"It's big concern from the First Nations because of the environmental impacts of what could happen, the physical damage to the animals and plants. What are the chemicals that are poisonous in there [the crude oil]? We don't know," he said.

"I can only imagine if it would've went through Gogama or something of that nature, it would've been a major catastrophe to our neighbours down the road."

Clean water concerns

Beardy agreed.

"It's only fair that the First Nation is notified to the full extent of what is happening, what is being undertaken to address the accident. There should be strong communication between the railway company and the First Nation," he said.

"Whoever's responsible has to clean up because the people of Mattagami depend for their livelihood to pursue their traditional activities with that area," he said.

Clean water is an issue, Beardy added, "because there's trout in those creeks. They trap in that area, as well hunt animals and birds. I think whoever is responsible for the accident has the responsibility, a legal responsibility, to make sure that it's cleaned up as best as possible."

For its part, the rail company reports it has a communications protocol with the First Nation in place.

"CN has communicated directly with the band council about the incident and has a communications process in place with the band to keep leaders updated on the derailment cleanup," Waldron said.

Health Canada weighs in

Meanwhile, Health Canada says it's closely monitoring updates on the situation from Ontario's Ministry of the Environment.

A Health Canada spokesperson told CBC News the community of Mattagami First Nation did contact Health Canada's Environmental Health Officer regarding the spill.

Mattagami First Nation was advised that current information indicates no risk to the community's water, and that the derailment occurred 40 kilometres from the community, with no entry point into its lake, Health Canada added.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/gogama-crude-oil-spill-worries-nearby-mattagami-first-nation-1.2962982>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Grassy Point oil terminal garners support from Northwest First Nations

by [Shaun Thomas - The Northern View](#)

posted Feb 13, 2015 at 8:00 AM

The company planning to build an oil export facility at Grassy Point near Lax Kw'alaams has garnered the backing of three Northwest First Nations.

At a press conference in Calgary on Feb. 11, Eagle Spirit Energy announced it had received declarations of support from Chief Dan George of the Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation (Burns Lake Band), Chief Archie Patrick of the Stelat'en First Nation near Fraser Lake and two Gitksan Hereditary Chiefs: Larry Marsden, Head Chief on behalf of the Gitsegukla Hereditary Chiefs, and Art Mathews, head chief on behalf of the Gitwangak Hereditary Chiefs.

Many of those chiefs said the reason for backing the project had to do with how Eagle Spirit Energy approached First Nations with the project and the potential equity in the \$14 billion to \$16 billion project which would carry refined light crude to an export terminal on the coast.

"This project will supports and shares the vision and declaration of First Nations, as it proposes to put ownership and control over the Environment in the hands of the rightful landowners.

The proposed Eagle Spirit Energy Corridor provides a business platform that puts First Nations in a critical decision-making role. The opportunity for First Nations to define and express themselves in a commercial context has arrived," read a statement signed by the chiefs.

"We are declaring that we are united in our thinking around natural resource commerce in our territories and in continuing our consideration for the First Nations' led and owned commercial stewardship opportunity presented by Eagle Spirit Energy."

The chiefs also state that this declaration, coupled with the Tsilhoqut'in decision handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada last year, send a strong message to other companies looking to do business in their territories.

"This declaration of support provides evidence that, in fact, we First Nations intend, can and will work together; and he or she who wishes to do resource business in our territory needs to work with us," read the statement.

"The attitudes and approach to the process of working together must change ... we have confirmed rights and title to economically valuable land and are prepared to work with business leaders who understand this new post-Tsilhoqut'in legal landscape."

Direct Link: <http://www.thenorthernview.com/news/291847001.html>

Lac La Ronge First Nations trappers receive \$75K compensation from SaskPower

Trappers say I1K and I2P transmission line affected their traditional lifestyle

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 13, 2015 5:30 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 13, 2015 5:30 AM CT

Trappers from the Lac La Ronge Indian Band recently completed a two-year negotiation process and won \$75,000 in compensation from SaskPower.

Ten trappers successfully argued that SaskPower's I1K and I2P transmission line, which runs through their traditional territory from Island Falls to Key Lake, negatively affected their livelihoods.

According to Chief Tammy Cook-Searson, the group petitioned the crown corporation for more money, but she wouldn't say how much.

'It's a lot of impact to the trappers and their traditional territory.'- *Chief Tammy Cook-Searson*

"Each individual trapper received a different amount based on the impact of the power line or based on the impact on their traditional activity," she said.

Some had to rebuild their cabins in a different location because it was in the way of the 300-kilometre transmission line. Others said they had difficulty maintaining their traditional livelihood of hunting and trapping.

"When there's activity, when there's helicopters going back and forth, when there's a big line, they have to clear a lot of brush. It's a lot of impact to the trappers and their traditional area," Cook-Searson said.

Although the compensation money isn't what the trappers hoped for, Cook-Searson said they're happy they got anything at all to mitigate their losses.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/lac-la-ronge-first-nations-trappers-receive-75k-compensation-from-saskpower-1.2955264>

The Métis question

Defining the uniquely Canadian people who founded Manitoba is no easy task

By: Mary Agnes Welch

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With a cringe and a sigh, those are the words lawyers, historians and indigenous experts start with when asked to define who exactly is Métis — the complicated, diverse, uniquely Canadian people who founded the modern province of Manitoba and then disappeared and dispersed for decades before rebounding today.

And, even people like University of Manitoba lawyer Aimee Craft, herself Métis, Anishinabe and Irish and immersed in the debate over indigenous identity, finds herself fighting the occasional "how Métis are you, really?" eyeroll.

As important as it is to define a group, especially when constitutional rights are at stake, Craft echoes the caution many offer when talking about the Métis — it's not her place to decide someone else's identity, especially since indigenous people have been the frequent victims of such a clumsy practice by government.

Who is Métis?

What the Constitution says

Not much, and that's partly why Canada is still figuring things out, 30 years later. Section 35 of the Constitution protects existing aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples, defined as the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. The Indian Act defined Indian people, and made a mess of it. The government never defined the Métis, who have worked hard to define themselves.

The Powley test

The 2003 Powley case was the first major aboriginal rights case concerning the Metis. It involved two Métis men, Roddy and Steve Powley, who killed a moose near Sault Ste. Marie without a license.

After a tortuous, ten-year legal battle, the Supreme Court ruled their right to hunt for food was protected by the Constitution. In the process, the court created the Powley test, which still holds today and which lays out who might claim a Métisright.

The judges made it clear that a Métis right can't be claimed by someone who simply has mixed indigenous and European ancestry. You must be part of the distinctive Métis people, who have their own customs separate from their First Nations and European ancestors. Among the questions posed by the test:

Are you a member of a contemporary Métis community, that calls itself Métisand that has historic roots that date back before Europeans took effective control of a territory?

Is there an objectively verifiable process to confirm you're a member of a Métis community, a process based documented history, self-identification and community acceptance? (The Manitoba Métis Federation's process is a good example.)

Is the right being claimed — in the Powley case, subsistence hunting — an important part of Métis life and a defining feature of a special relationship to the land? Is there continuity between the current practice and the historic one?

The MMF test

To become a member of the Manitoba Métis Federation, you must self-identify as Métis, which you essentially do by filling out the application form.

Most importantly, you must also get your genealogy done and provide documentary proof of your ancestral links to the Métis nation, the homeland that emerged from the Red River settlement.

That's easy if your tree uncovers a name like Grant, Lagimodiere or Norquay. It's also easy if scrip was issued to an ancestor who owed land after 1870 or if census records record "HB" for half-breed next to a relative's name. The St. Boniface Historical Society and the Métis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre can help with all this, for a fee.

With your family tree, you can apply for MMF membership, which often includes a meeting with MMF staff.

— *Source: Manitoba Métis Federation, Supreme Court of Canada, Métis Nation of Ontario.*

"The question to ask is, what is your connection to that Métis heritage or that existing community and, just as importantly, what are you giving back to it?" says Craft.

Despite a cultural renaissance that dates back 50 years, despite the ennobling of Louis Riel, the protection of Métis rights in the 1982 Constitution and some big legal victories since, despite no longer being the "bastards of the plains", confusion about Métis identity persists.

Are you Métis if your mother is First Nations and your father is Mennonite?

(Probably not.)

Do you need to trace your ancestry back to the original Red River Métis settlement?

(Probably, in Manitoba at least.)

Are you Métis if you're from a mixed-blood community in Ontario or Quebec?

(That's touchy. Depends who you ask.)

Can you be blonde and blue-eyed and still be Métis?

(Of course.)

If you didn't grow up fiddling and jigging and speaking Michif, can you still be Métis?

(Yes.)

Can you be Anglo-Métis?

(Yes.)

Do you need to have a certain amount of First Nations blood to be Métis?

(No, and the idea of a blood quantum is kind of offensive.)

Can you claim Indian status and Métis membership at the same time?

(Probably not.)

If you are Franco-Manitoban, are you also Métis?

(Not necessarily.)

Do people just call themselves Métis to get a scholarship?

(Sometimes, but it's not quite that easy.)

Is Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman really Métis?

(Yes, but he should probably get his membership card like his sister and cousins and make it official.)

"Being Métis means constantly swimming against the current," said Janet La France, one of the genealogists who trace people's Métis heritage at St. Boniface's Centre du patrimoine. "You're constantly staking your ground and proving that you exist and proving you deserve to exist."

Future benefits of being Métis

These questions, which are actually easier to answer in Manitoba's politically unified Métis environment, have taken on a new urgency, thanks to a recent landmark Supreme Court decision and another case likely to be heard this year.

Those cases could mean being Métis may eventually come with significant benefits much like those won by First Nations — some role in big developments like Bipole III that go through traditional Métis hunting and trapping land, a compensation deal to fix the mess the federal government made of land promised to the Métis after 1870, a more formal duty by the government to consult the Métis, money, programs and recognition.

First, there's the Manitoba Métis Federation decision, which delved back into the history of the province's founding, its entry into Confederation and the deal struck by Riel and his provisional government to protect Métis landholdings and give Métis children a head-start against the expected tsunami of white settlers.

Roughly 7,000 Métis children were promised 1.4 million acres of land by the federal government. But the process of identifying what land ought to be made available to which Métis children was an unmitigated mess, rife with, in the words of the court, "repeated mistakes and inaction that persisted for more than a decade."

As the process dragged on, children were swindled out of land by speculators. Allocations often involved the worst-quality land, scattered far from family. Scrip — paper credit — was given out instead, often far below market land values.

Where once the Métis made up 85 per cent of Manitoba and were the dominant political and cultural force, the land debacle was the beginning of a dramatic decline that lasted until after the Second World War.

The Métis land claim case took more than 30 years to work its way through the courts, and it almost bankrupted the MMF. The Supreme Court delivered its decision two years ago next month, ruling Canada acted inconsistently with the honour of the Crown when it bungled the land distribution.

The trouble is, two years later, no one yet knows what that decision means in practical, modern terms. If the federal government agrees to right the historic mess, it could mean negotiations and a settlement worth billions to Manitoba's Métis. Or it could ultimately only offer moral vindication to the descendants of the Red River settlement. No one yet knows.

Court cases muddy waters

Coming up next is the Daniels case, a case the Supreme Court agreed to hear, likely this year, that could dramatically expand the federal government's responsibilities to Métis and non-status Indians, effectively granting them similar rights now afforded to First Nations, including the right to be consulted on resource and land issues and access to federal programs.



Genealogists at the Centre du patrimoine at La Société historique de Saint-Boniface help people search for a Métis family tree to show their ancestral connection. This is the first step towards Manitoba Métis Federation membership. Historical documents must exist to prove the connection; if no proof is found the application is returned with this "no Métis found" stamp. (MELISSA TAIT / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

The case could effectively make the Métis the collective responsibility of the federal government, a huge re-thinking of an already-murky relationship that more and more

covers not just the traditional "postage stamp" province that entered Confederation but also the so-called Métis breadbasket in Western Manitoba and, really, anywhere Métis people trapped, traded or settled.

Where do the Métis live?

Location of Metis Winnipeggers, from the 2011 National Household Survey:

These cases, especially Daniels, have also muddied the waters when it comes to legally defining the Métis. In Daniels, the Supreme Court may have to sort out, again, a definition of Métis. Does simply having "Indian ancestry" make you Métis, as the lower court suggested, or must you have something more, a historic and cultural connection to a unique Métis nation?

As the children of French or Scottish fur traders and First Nations mothers, the Métis in Manitoba quickly created a hybrid culture that took many local forms, expressed itself in many indigenous and European languages and spread all over a homeland that included Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Midwestern United States.

Historians and Métis activists in Manitoba describe a people known for their love of the land, for their large and close families dominated by elders, for jigging and fiddling and distinctive clothing decorated with colourful, stylized beadwork. The famous Red River cart allowed the Métis to dominate trade routes through the west and the famous red striped sash, a handy item when out on the buffalo hunt, is still their symbol.

MMF president David Chartrand talks about his family's entrepreneurial spirit, its fear of ever becoming wards of the government and a pride that made the Métis unwilling to showcase their poverty.

Unlike First Nations, confined largely to reserves for generations, the Métis were often able to blend, especially in the dark decades of racism and marginalization following the failed Northwest Rebellion and Riel's death. Many Métis people, if they were white enough and spoke French, passed as French and set aside their Métis roots. Others who grew up close to a reserve, who had a First Nations parent and who felt closer to First Nations culture, chose to take up their Indian status.



"I'm still caught between two systems... First Nations don't think I'm equal to them, and non-aboriginal society thinks I'm getting what all the Indians are getting," says David Chartrand, president of the Manitoba Métis Federation. (MELISSA TAIT / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

Chartrand himself is an example of this limbo. He grew up very poor in Duck Bay, to a single mother who took in washing to make ends meet. His village was just on the outskirts of the Pine Creek First Nation, home of Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Grand Chief Derek Nepinak, who is Chartrand's cousin. His granny lived on the reserve but didn't feel comfortable there. Métis folks in Duck Bay knew they were different from Pine Creek. There was plenty of interaction, but also animosity and division.

But, when Chartrand went to Dauphin for school, he was no longer distinct from his neighbours at Pine Creek. They were all treated like "Indians" when they went to town. "The darker ones got a hell of a beating," said Chartrand.

Chartrand spoke Saulteaux growing up. He doesn't speak [Michif](#) — the unique combination of Cree and French created by the Métis. He speaks English with a light French accent — he says "tree" for "three" and ends sentences with the classic French-Canadian "hein?"

"I'm still caught between two systems," said Chartrand. "First Nations don't think I'm equal to them and non-aboriginal society thinks I'm getting what all the Indians are getting."

Definition too narrow?

The MMF's definition of Métis is rigid and based on the idea the Métis were the founding nation of Manitoba. You have to trace your ancestors back to the original Métis settlement in Red River — something about 100 people a month come to the St. Boniface archives to do. That means using church records and census data to look for references to ancestors listed as half-breeds or copies of scrip issued to a Métis child after 1870.

If you can't trace your roots to Riel's Métis, the historic nation, you can't join the MMF and you're not officially Métis.

But many argue that definition is too narrow, that it excludes unique communities that have sprung up elsewhere that have only a tenuous connection to Riel's Métis Nation, if at all.

Université de Saint-Boniface professor Denis Gagnon has a \$500,000 grant to study those communities and their Métis identity, in New Brunswick, Ontario, Labrador and beyond. Much like the Métis communities near Norway House or in Duck Bay, many sprung up near First Nations reserves. They were autonomous. They had a deep connection to the land and specific territorial claims and they developed a unique culture that survived for perhaps 150 years.

"They are not a nation. They are communities," said Gagnon. "The MMF and the national Métis council always play with this word. To be Métis is to be a nation. No, to be a nation is a kind of way of being Métis. It doesn't stop others who have distinct communities from also equally being Métis."

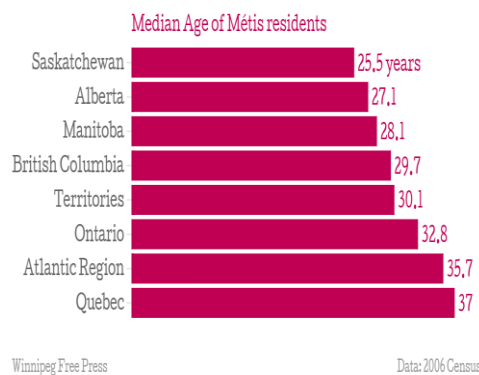
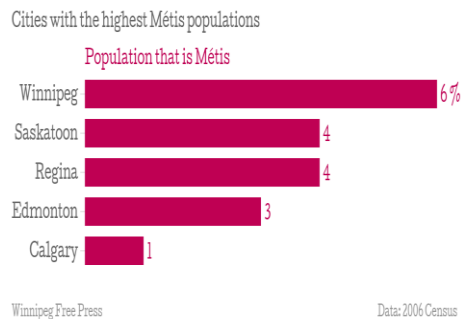
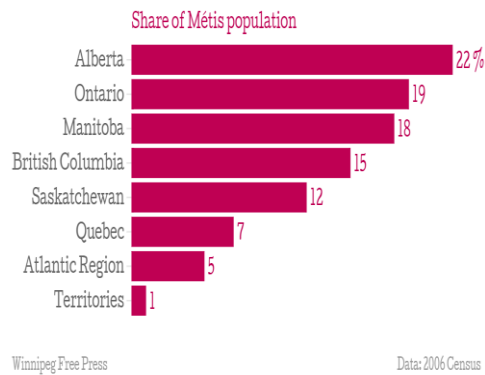


Métis University Students' Association President: Brad Boudreau (on the fiddle) along with student members of the association, from left: Chris Allard, Alana Robert, Erik Klassen, Chalena McKay and Jamal Abas. (RUTH BONNEVILLE / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

In some cases, those communities are now seeking recognition from the federal and provincial governments and from national Métis organisations, and they're bolstered by Supreme Court rulings.

Many consider those people "little m-Métis" — mixed-blood people who are unique but not as unique as the capital M Métis nation whose roots are in Manitoba.

By the numbers



Here's the flipside to the ancestry-only definition: What if you can trace your ancestry to the Red River Métis but you've experienced no hint of Métis culture in your life — no jigging, no connection to the land, none of the racism or marginalization that is often passed through a family's DNA?

If being Métis in Manitoba means tracing your heritage to the original Red River settlement, doesn't that mean thousands of Manitobans with no personal link to the culture could call themselves Métis? And, doesn't that feed the perception that many people do just that, call themselves Métis just to get a scholarship or a job, just to check a box?

That's what Laura Kiefer wondered when she checked the box. She was applying to the Asper School of Business and remembered that an older sibling researched the family's genealogy and discovered a Métis connection. She frankly admits she checked the "aboriginal" box in hopes it would boost her chance of getting into business school.

"I quickly started to feel a bit guilty, as if I had abused the system," said Kiefer, who grew up in Lorette. "I decided to make a change and start trying to learn more about where I came from."

Now, she's an aboriginal student recruiter and vice-president of the Association of Aboriginal Commerce Students, learning more every day about her historic roots and what it means to be Métis.

That, according to Métis experts, is a common and completely legitimate experience, people looking for their Métis heritage with vague hopes of some benefit, only to discover a genuine connection with their past. Canadians of all stripes do this all the time. It's just that some quick Googling on Ancestry.com doesn't usually come with constitutional consequences.

Here's another common scenario: What if you lost touch with your Métis heritage because a parent died, you were adopted or, most commonly, your family chose years ago to pass as white in hopes of ducking some of the racism rife in Manitoba over the last century? Does that make you any less Métis?

Sara Corley — light skinned, reddish hair, Anglo last name — didn't learn about her Métis heritage until she was 16. Her Métis father died when she was a baby, and she lost touch with his side of the family. She never, as she said, marinated in Métis culture.

It wasn't until she was in her late teens, when she got word her grandmother might soon die, that she made contact with her father's family, learned her ties to Marie-Anne Gaboury, the first European woman to travel and settle in Western Canada and the grandmother of Louis Riel, and learned how her grandparents were proud to be Métis but cloistered their culture to spare their children some of the burden of racism.

Now a university student studying psychology and indigenous issues, she's teaching her three young boys Métis culture, rebuilding connections with her extended family, especially near St. Laurent, immersing herself in the dances and the music.

"I realized I had this extra thing I didn't know about myself... I do feel like people are starting to let go of some of the shame that's associated with history and realizing the culture is beautiful," said Corley. "It starts with the hard stuff, and slowly we're going to sandpaper the rough stuff into something smooth."

A Métis story: Complicated identity

Justin Johnson's great-great-great grandfather, with his black eyes, wayward hair and grave look, stands just behind Louis Riel in the famous 1870 group photo of Riel's provisional government.



Justin Johnson, who identifies as Métis and Franco-Manitoban, is studying Master of Arts in Indigenous Governance at University of Winnipeg. With his thesis he is hoping to develop a Métis philosophy.

Just two years after the photo was snapped, that same ancestor, Andre Beauchemin, offered to cede his St. Vital seat so Riel could run.

When it comes to Red River roots, it doesn't get much more Métis than that.

And, yet, for years, Johnson's family concealed its remarkable lineage and its link to one of the founding peoples of the province.

"My grandmother would not speak of her Métis identity. My grandfather would rarely speak publicly of his Métis identity because he would lose his job," said Johnson, now a Master's student at the University of Winnipeg. "It was just not something we spoke about. It was never discussed around the table."

Adding to the burden of silence was the legacy of vanished land common to many Métis families. Johnson's ancestors farmed near Île-des-Chênes, just east of where Johnson grew up generations later in Lorette. But the federal government seized the land and turned it over to pioneers.

Growing up, gleaning tidbits from his grandparents, uncles and aunts, especially on his on mother's side, Johnson began to realize he wasn't just Franco-Manitoban.

"I stated to think, well, we're definitely not only white, that we had this mixture of French Canadian ancestry and indigenous ancestry," said Johnson, 23.

And, there were the close family ties, the endless teasing and joking, the storytelling — small things Johnson now sees as quintessentially Métis.

Johnson's family does have his grandfather's journals and notebooks, where he recorded his own thoughts and laid down those of other Métis leaders he read. Those scribblings, said Johnson, show how proud his grandfather was of his Métis heritage despite political and cultural pressure to blend in.



In this 1870 photograph from the Archives of Manitoba, Louis Riel (centre) is surrounded by his council, including Justin Johnson's great-great-great-grandfather André Beauchemin (back row, third from right). (ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA)

"He was honouring it by some kind of silence," said Johnson. "It hurts me to know that. How can you be silent and at that point still be proud?"

It wasn't until Johnson was in university and began to get active in the Franco-Manitoban community and the Conseil jeunesse provincial, a provincial youth council for francophones, that he started to get interested in his background. He researched his family genealogy, got his Métis card at 18 and nudged others in his family to do the same.

Now, as a Master's student, he's beginning to research the development of a particularly Métis political philosophy, one built around not just Riel's writings but the political documents of the time that sought to balance European, Métis and indigenous values.

"We often think that one of them has to win," said Johnson. "But you can be more than one thing, you can be two, you can be three and have different perspectives on an issue or on the fundamentals, and yet you can still live together."

Like most Métis people, Johnson is still juggling his French-Canadian, Irish, Scottish and Métis roots, trying to find the right way to describe a complicated identity.

"Lately, I say I'm a Red River Métis," said Johnson. "I feel as though I can publicly say I'm Métis. I can be proud of it and I can study it on my ancestors' land."

A Métis story: Family roots almost lost

On the day the Supreme Court of Canada ruled the Métis were deceived and defrauded out of thousands of acres of land, Shauna Mulligan remembers seeing a quick television news clip of a reporter live near Louis Riel's gravesite in St. Boniface.

It gave her goosebumps, and it still does thinking about it today, in part because the moment sharpened a history that's still fresh, that marks Mulligan's link with family roots she almost lost.



Shauna Mulligan, 37, learned she was Métis late in life while she was in university. She hasn't completed the process of the getting an MMF card, but she celebrates her family's Métis heritage, is proud of her sash. (MELISSA TAIT / WINNIPEG FREE PRE)

"For others who grew up with the fiddling and Métis culture and the food, that may be their primary link," said Mulligan, a 37-year-old former member of the Canadian Forces now finishing up her degree in native studies at the University of Manitoba. "For me, it's about finding those roots."

Mulligan knew as a kid she was Métis — her grandfather grew up near Batoche, Sask., spoke Michif, the language of the Métis people, as a child and always hung the famous red striped sash above his bed. He would talk about his love of the land and his connection to the Creator, Métis things Mulligan shrugged off as a child, and never really talked about at school.

"That was a very short trip to getting my butt kicked," she said.

It wasn't until she was well into adulthood, studying Métis and First Nations history and politics at university that her family's past, known but not discussed, became clear. "I kind of put two and two together and said 'Oh, now I get it. Now I understand'," she said. "I was able to finally put a name to the things that I experienced."

Though she's still learning, she now identifies herself as Métis, and runs into all the typical questions that raises.

"As a matter of fact, I get 'You don't look Métis'," said Mulligan. "I do get friends who have known me for a while who give me the sideways look — 'but you're so pasty. You have blue eyes. I don't understand how can you be Métis.' "

Or she gets questions about whether she has a First Nations mother and French father, and has to muddle through an explanation of the unique and historic nature of Manitoba's Métis people.

"It's a complicated answer," she said. "It's not just this one thing makes me Métis."

Like most Manitoba Métis, Mulligan thinks a historic family connection to the original Red River settlers is vital, and she has a genealogy done for her grandfather to confirm hers.

"At the same time, understanding the process of self-identification is a huge thing and I wouldn't want to tell someone 'No, you're not Métis,' " said Mulligan. "That's a really complicated thing."

Mulligan and her mother haven't yet gathered up their birth certificates and other paperwork, along with her grandfathers genealogy, and taken it to the Manitoba Métis Federation to get a card, largely because the process is a bit daunting.

"The other day, my mom said 'I'm really glad you've waited because this is something I want to do with you, as a family,' " said Mulligan.

A Métis story: 'I'm 100 per cent Métis'

When Janet La France was seven or eight, her mom sat her down and revealed a family secret. They were Métis.

"She said it wasn't something that I should go spreading around," remembered La France. "The reason I shouldn't tell other people, or other kids, is that not everybody thought it was a good thing."



Janet La France's mother told her she was Métis when she was eight years old, but instructed her to keep it quiet. La France is a genealogist at the La Société historique de Saint-Boniface, where she often assists Manitobans searching for their Métis heritage. (MELISSA TAIT / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

If being Métis was a small slander to protect herself against back then, it's still a source of frustration today, not because La France carries any shame but because so few

Manitobans understand her heritage. People think the Métis are like unicorns. They're not a real people. They don't really exist.

"One of the classic things is people asking you "Oh, how Métis are you?" she said. "They mean, how Cree are you, or how Ojibway are you or how Assiniboine are you? If you tell them that your great-great-grandmother was 50 per cent, then their mind registers 'oh well, you're not that Métis...' They don't understand that a Métis person is not the sum of two parts."

La France didn't grow up with the stereotypical trappings of Métis culture — the jigging, the fiddling, the beaded folk-art. She grew up closer to her father's French-Canadian heritage. But, the family went to Festival du Voyageur and her mother made sure she had a pile of kid's books from Pemmican Publications, the Métis publisher.

And, through osmosis, she knew her grandfather, who died before she was born, was a natural storyteller and loved woodworking, traits she later associated with his Métis roots.

It wasn't until La France was a teenager, and a product of the French school system, that she began to become more acutely aware of her background and her links to Louis Riel's Métis nation.

"I was taught that Riel was a hero and martyr and the founder of our province," said La France. "I had a friend in the English school system, exactly the same age, same grade, and she was taught he was a traitor who deserved to die. It was such disparity between the two."

She laughs now at her teenage indignation. Years later, her mother got the family genealogy done at the St. Boniface's centre du patrimoine, the archives where La France now works, researching the Métis ancestry of others just like her.

They traced La France's grandfather's family to the Red River settlement, to men who came over with the fur trading companies and stayed to become carpenters and canoe-builders — not big names like Riel or Grant, just average Métis Joes.

Along with her mother and sister, La France then applied for her Manitoba Métis Federation card, and her harvesting permit, even though she's not really the type to go hunting or fishing.

The process of rediscovery is one thousands of young Métis people have made as they try to navigate one of the most complicated cultures in Manitoba, one defined by constant mixing, by mobility and by decades of camouflage.

That process was catapulted forward recently by the Supreme Court decision that found Manitoba's Métis were the victims of swindles, delays and mismanagement in the years following the birth of the province in 1870, and never received thousands of acres of land they were due.

It's a decision with unclear implications but that, for La France, reinforces the place of the Métis as one of Manitoba's founding nations.

"A decision like this, even though I don't think I will personally benefit, I'm interested in seeing how far have we come, really," said La France. "Maybe people are not going to constantly make a visual assessment or ask me how Métis I am or quantify my blood or not really believe me or tell me the Métis don't exist... I'm not the sum of two parts. I'm 100 per cent Métis."

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/The-Metis-question-291731281.html#>

After Supreme Court ruling, a clash of claims between Métis, First Nations

Feds use ruling to stall land deals, leaders fear

By: Mary Agnes Welch

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MMF president David Chartrand says a map of available Crown land is the first step. (MELISSA TAIT / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

Two years after Canada's top court ruled Manitoba's Métis were duped and stonewalled out of thousands of hectares of land, there's been no movement on a settlement agreement.

But tensions between the Métis and First Nations over competing land claims are on the rise, sparking worry the federal government will pit the two indigenous groups against each other.

"What I'm seeing is potential threats," said Manitoba Metis Federation president David Chartrand. "Hopefully, common sense will prevail, and if we work with them, they'll work with us."

Two years ago next month, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled government delays and ineptitude, as well as land speculation and swindlers, blocked thousands of Métis children from receiving much of the 566,000 hectares of land promised by the federal government when Manitoba entered Confederation. The government's bungling of the land disbursement has impacted thousands of descendants of the original Red River Settlement.

The justices didn't tell the federal government how to fix the 140-year-old problem. But the court called the matter an "ongoing rift in the national fabric," that threatens reconciliation and constitutional harmony.

'What I'm seeing is potential threats. Hopefully, common sense will prevail, and if we work with them, they'll work with us' -- Manitoba Metis Federation president David Chartrand

Chartrand said Ottawa is morally obliged to negotiate an eventual settlement, which could include a trust worth millions or even billions earmarked for education bursaries, venture capital for Métis-run businesses or home-ownership programs.

He said the first step is creating a map of available Crown land, something the MMF is working on now, and negotiating the terms of reference for future talks with Canada on a compensation agreement. So far, Ottawa has been unwilling, said Chartrand.

"They haven't moved an inch in that direction," he said. "(Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard) Valcourt's position is just stall, stall, stall, and eventually there's going to come a time when the government has to deal with it."

Instead, Ottawa has told First Nations leaders it must begin consulting Métis communities as part of the treaty land entitlement (TLE) process -- a complex and sluggish process set up to give land to bands still owed thousands of hectares from treaties signed more than a century ago.

In Manitoba, 15 bands such as Brokenhead and Norway House are still owed a total of 200,000 hectares of land. Several other bands were also shorted thousands of hectares. A

formal process was set up in 1997 to begin identifying Crown parcels and converting them to reserves, but progress has been glacial.

In the last two years, only a 0.046-hectare plot in the town of Swan River was converted to reserve status for Sapotaweyak Cree Nation.

Causing delays are new rules created by Ottawa that say all aboriginal groups, such the Métis, within a 70-kilometre radius of a band's TLE selection, must be consulted before Ottawa will agree to convert the land to reserve.

Many parcels of land bands have asked for under the TLE process encompass traditional Métis communities or are important to the Métis for trapping, hunting and spiritual practices.

Treaty Land Entitlement Committee president and Sapotaweyak Chief Nelson Genaille wrote to the federal government last year decrying the delays.

Both Genaille and Treaty Land Entitlement Committee executive director Chris Henderson fear Ottawa is using Métis land claims to delay an already slow process. Genaille also worries Ottawa may be pursuing a "divide and conquer" approach that could pit First Nations people against the Métis as both lay claim to the same land.

"That tactic has been used many times in history," said Genaille.

Historic tensions have flared recently between First Nations leaders and the Métis over a blockade still underway by Sapotaweyak Cree Nation on land it claims as part of its TLE.

Last month, in a bid to stop construction of Manitoba Hydro's Bipole III power line, band members set up a small blockade in the path of crews cutting a 200-kilometre stretch intended for the line.

The crews work for a Métis economic development company that won the contract to clear the land, which is also claimed by the Manitoba Metis Federation.

"The brakes are coming," warned Chartrand. "I have the same right to that land as they do."

Henderson said what may be needed is a consultation protocol agreed to by First Nations and the Métis that could speed up the process and quell the perception Ottawa is happy to use the Métis to stall First Nations land claims.

"If this is the new requirement going forward, we would have to be patient and accommodating as well," said Henderson.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/clash-of-claims-on-metis-first-nations-291943961.html>

After Supreme Court ruling, a clash of claims between Métis, First Nations

Feds use ruling to stall land deals, leaders fear

By: Mary Agnes Welch

Posted: 02/14/2015 3:00 AM



MMF president David Chartrand says a map of available Crown land is the first step. (MELISSA TAIT / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

Two years after Canada's top court ruled Manitoba's Métis were duped and stonewalled out of thousands of hectares of land, there's been no movement on a settlement agreement.

But tensions between the Métis and First Nations over competing land claims are on the rise, sparking worry the federal government will pit the two indigenous groups against each other.

"What I'm seeing is potential threats," said Manitoba Metis Federation president David Chartrand. "Hopefully, common sense will prevail, and if we work with them, they'll work with us."

Two years ago next month, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled government delays and ineptitude, as well as land speculation and swindlers, blocked thousands of Métis children from receiving much of the 566,000 hectares of land promised by the federal government when Manitoba entered Confederation. The government's bungling of the land disbursement has impacted thousands of descendants of the original Red River Settlement.

The justices didn't tell the federal government how to fix the 140-year-old problem. But the court called the matter an "ongoing rift in the national fabric," that threatens reconciliation and constitutional harmony.

'What I'm seeing is potential threats. Hopefully, common sense will prevail, and if we work with them, they'll work with us' -- Manitoba Metis Federation president David Chartrand

Chartrand said Ottawa is morally obliged to negotiate an eventual settlement, which could include a trust worth millions or even billions earmarked for education bursaries, venture capital for Métis-run businesses or home-ownership programs.

He said the first step is creating a map of available Crown land, something the MMF is working on now, and negotiating the terms of reference for future talks with Canada on a compensation agreement. So far, Ottawa has been unwilling, said Chartrand.

"They haven't moved an inch in that direction," he said. "(Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard) Valcourt's position is just stall, stall, stall, and eventually there's going to come a time when the government has to deal with it."

Instead, Ottawa has told First Nations leaders it must begin consulting Métis communities as part of the treaty land entitlement (TLE) process -- a complex and sluggish process set up to give land to bands still owed thousands of hectares from treaties signed more than a century ago.

In Manitoba, 15 bands such as Brokenhead and Norway House are still owed a total of 200,000 hectares of land. Several other bands were also shorted thousands of hectares. A formal process was set up in 1997 to begin identifying Crown parcels and converting them to reserves, but progress has been glacial.

In the last two years, only a 0.046-hectare plot in the town of Swan River was converted to reserve status for Sapotaweyak Cree Nation.

Causing delays are new rules created by Ottawa that say all aboriginal groups, such the Métis, within a 70-kilometre radius of a band's TLE selection, must be consulted before Ottawa will agree to convert the land to reserve.

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Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/clash-of-claims-on-metis-first-nations-291943961.html>

Dallas Smith: Natives need information to make good land-use decisions

- February 14, 2015. 12:11 am



In B.C., moving ahead with any kind of resource development project can be complicated.

First Nations interests must be accommodated and government regulations satisfied. Public opinion is often divided and proponents of resource development need confidence that they're making a sound investment. When I recently joined the board of directors of Geoscience B.C. it was, in part, because I believe British Columbia needs a go-to organization that puts independent science on the table when considering proposed resource projects. First Nations need the information to assess projects in order to make well-informed decisions on land use in their traditional territories.

Geoscience B.C. doesn't build mines or profit from its work. For 10 years, this non-profit earth-science organization has been researching mineral and energy resource potential around the province and putting all the information it uncovers into the public domain. Government and the resource sector provide funding, but Geoscience B.C. functions as an independent, arms-length organization that provides information such as aerial geo-surveys and water studies.

Geoscience B.C.'s information assists First Nations to better understand natural resource potential. We can have informed discussions with potential investors or developers who want to consult about a resource and, if it's appropriate, economic development can take place. If it's not, due to environmental or cultural priorities, there is certainty before any money is invested.

As president of Nanwakolas Council, which represents First Nations on northern Vancouver Island and the southern Central Coast, I had the opportunity to work with Geoscience B.C. in 2012-2013 as it undertook extensive geo-surveys to look for potential mineral deposits within our traditional territories. Through the organization's community

engagement, we learned about what kinds of geological studies would take place and what mineral exploration and mining might look like in our territories.

When Geoscience B.C. made its project findings public, there was an unprecedented surge of mineral claim staking — which hadn't happened on Vancouver Island in decades. Today, discussions are proceeding for some opportunities that came out of that process. We are hopeful that this work will lead to job creation and employment for our young people.

Each year, the Nanwakolas Council referrals office handles more than 750 referrals and information sharing files that involve resource development, such as forestry or mineral exploration on northeast Vancouver Island and the southern Central Coast. Each set of documents coming into our office must be evaluated against one or more out of 13 pieces of provincial legislation that regulate resource development.

Ultimately, our referrals office protects and advocates for recognition of the Aboriginal rights of our member First Nations. Nanwakolas makes sure that members are aware of these activities, that we respond to referrals in a timely way and that the issues and concerns of our members are looked after.

We do not work in isolation. Nanwakolas has built strategic partnerships with the resource sector and works proactively with umbrella resource development associations such as the Coast Forest Products Association and Geoscience B.C. Our interests are also represented on the executive of the Island Coastal Economic Trust, which involves 50 municipal-government members and MLAs working to create a diversified and competitive regional economy. We share and strongly support the objectives of the trust.

At a local level, we want to create jobs, fund community programs and give First Nations the opportunity for a bigger role in the main stream economy. Resource projects can help us reach those goals. It's in everyone's best interest to ensure that members of Nanwakolas Council — and all other First Nations in B.C. — have good information when they're considering potential land access, use and evaluating resource development. This is where Geoscience B.C. comes in.

The better we understand the natural environment — including surface and underground resources such as minerals or water — the easier it is to decide whether a project fits with our cultural values.

When we're confident that we're basing our land-use decisions on sound, trusted information, we can give our potential business partners quick, straightforward answers about how and where they can proceed.

This is good business practice for everyone involved in the resource sector. This month, as the 2015 provincial budget works its way through the legislature, Nanwakolas Council urges the provincial government to give strong consideration to the benefits Geoscience

B.C. brings First Nations as well as other communities, and to ensure that it has the funding necessary to sustain its work over the long term.

Dallas Smith is president and CEO of [Nanwakolas Council](#) and a director of [Geoscience B.C.](#)

Direct Link: <http://blogs.theprovince.com/2015/02/14/dallas-smith-natives-need-information-to-make-good-land-use-decisions/>

Aboriginal groups listed on Tory action plan say they were not consulted

KATHRYN BLAZE CARLSON

The Globe and Mail

Published Monday, Feb. 16 2015, 6:00 AM EST

Last updated Monday, Feb. 16 2015, 6:00 AM EST

Several aboriginal leaders who are listed as having provided input during the creation of the Conservative government's action plan on violence against aboriginal women say they were not, in fact, consulted.

The discrepancies about the consultation process are surfacing just as native leaders prepare to sit down with federal cabinet ministers at an coming round table on Canada's more than 1,181 murdered and missing aboriginal women.

In response to a formal request from Liberal MP Kirsty Duncan regarding the action plan and the feedback that shaped it, Status of Women Canada provided a list of 12 organizations – and the specific individuals from those organizations – that it says were consulted. The department's response includes the time, date and location of the relevant meeting or phone call.

The Globe and Mail canvassed the organizations and found that leaders of three organizations – the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the National Association of Friendship Centres and the Manitoba Métis Federation – did not take issue with appearing on the list. However, several others, including the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), said they were not consulted on the action plan.

The plan, which allocates \$25-million over five years, was announced in September and marks the government's response to recommendations made in 2014 by a parliamentary committee that heard testimony on the issue of violence against indigenous women. It includes funding for projects aimed at breaking intergenerational cycles of violence,

additional assistance for victims and their families, and the development of community safety plans where indigenous women face high levels of crime.

The executive director of Pauktuutit, which represents Inuit women, said the department is correct in stating she and the group's president had a phone call last March with Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch, the lead minister on the issue of murdered and missing native women. However, she said the purpose of that conversation was to assist Ms. Leitch in planning a visit to Iqaluit to meet with victims' families.

"We were not consulted," said Tracy O'Hern, the executive director. "Of course, individuals and families have a great deal to say about what they experienced with police, the justice system et cetera. But they're not necessarily aware of the broader policy issues, nor should they be. It's the organizations that are."

Michèle Audette, the former NWAC president who recently stepped down to seek a Liberal nomination ahead of the fall federal election, is listed as one of two NWAC officials consulted at a meeting in February of last year – one month before Ms. Leitch's spokesman said the consultation process began.

"That was not a consultation," Ms. Audette said. The meeting, she said, was about the association's funding request for a particular project. NWAC executive director Claudette Dumont-Smith said the group was not consulted on the action plan.

The consultations list, which is formally known as a response to an Order Paper question, is incomplete since the identities of some of those consulted, specifically victims' families, were withheld for privacy reasons. Also, because the response was crafted by the department rather than the minister's office, it does not include communications initiated by Ms. Leitch and could contain inaccurate attendee information if organizations sent someone other than those initially thought to attend.

The government, which has in the past been accused of failing to seek input from indigenous stakeholders on issues such as education and resource development, is defending the consultation process. Ms. Leitch said in an e-mail she "met personally with victims' families and First Nations' groups – in almost all cases without staff or officials."

And her spokesman, Andrew McGrath, said it is "not accurate" to suggest any of the meetings were convened for a purpose other than soliciting views on how Ottawa should address violence against aboriginal women. "Our definition of consultation is any form of dialogue that can contribute to the development of good public policy," he said.

In her Order Paper question, Ms. Duncan had also asked "what submissions, proposals or recommendations were made by stakeholders during the consultation process." The Status of Women Canada response says such information "is not held by the Agency." Mr. McGrath said families made submissions on the basis of confidentiality, and that "if organizations wish to make their submissions public then they are free to do so."

Carolyn Bennett, the Liberal critic for Aboriginal Affairs, criticized the action plan as “a laundry list of existing programs.” She also expressed concern that while the plan cites the need for all levels of government to work together, Status of Women Canada says provinces and territories “were not consulted specifically on the development of the plan.”

Ms. Leitch said the provinces and territories “have been engaged on this file” over the past several years and that “their thoughts on this issue are quite well-known” – an apparent reference to their calls for a national inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women. The Conservative government has refused to launch such a probe, and has cited its action plan as evidence it is working to address the problem.

Of the 12 organizations on the list, leaders of two First Nations communities could not be reached for comment.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/aboriginal-groups-listed-on-tory-action-plan-say-they-were-not-consulted/article23010819/>

Montreal office tower site may be an aboriginal burial ground

NICOLAS VAN PRAET

The Globe and Mail

Published Sunday, Feb. 15 2015, 9:00 PM EST

Last updated Wednesday, Feb. 18 2015, 2:42 PM EST

Canadian real estate developer Ivanhoé Cambridge is suspending construction on a new Montreal office tower after a freelance photographer expressed concerns that the site could be an ancient aboriginal burial ground.

Ivanhoé, the real-estate arm of pension fund giant Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, confirmed Sunday it has “voluntarily paused” preliminary excavation work at the downtown Montreal site while outside archeological specialists advise the company on the next steps to take.

The 27-storey tower is being built in partnership with Toronto-based Manulife Financial Corp., and when finished, it will house the insurer’s Quebec employees on 11 floors following its \$4-billion purchase of Standard Life Canada. It is one of the last significant undeveloped sites in Montreal’s core.

“I think we want to be prudent and responsible,” said Ivanhoé spokesman Sébastien Théberge, adding he did not know how long the pause would last.

The company’s decision to freeze construction comes after Montreal photographer Robert Galbraith raised concerns with both Ivanhoé and officials in Quebec’s culture and communications ministry that the site, a former parking lot between Mansfield and Metcalfe streets, could have valuable historical relics under ground. The situation highlights the sensitivity of questions pertaining to culture and history, as even a single citizen has the potential to influence progress on a \$200-million project.

Mr. Galbraith said he believes the construction area, known by its address at 900 de Maisonneuve Ouest, could be part of what historians have identified as the Dawson archeological site. Covering an estimated two acres and studied by then-McGill College director William Dawson in the late 1800s, it was an ancient aboriginal village with remains that included tools and human bones.

Some people believe the site is actually Hochelaga, the St. Lawrence Iroquoian village visited by explorer Jacques Cartier in 1535, and later abandoned. But that has never been proven.

In an e-mailed statement, Ivanhoé said the 900 Maisonneuve site is located outside any designated archeological zone, as it understands them. The company added it has obtained all the permits necessary to proceed with the work and it is “in full conformity” of its obligations, including those related to cultural heritage. It said it will consult provincial officials on the matter.

Mr. Galbraith said that while he is delighted the site will receive a proper re-evaluation by outside specialists, archeological scenes such as these don’t fit comfortably into modern constructs like streets and city blocks.

“Are we willing to risk that this site is within defined parameters as we may interpret it today?” Mr. Galbraith asked. “[It’s possible] this site is a sort of floating site, meaning it could go as far as Crescent Street,” several blocks over.

Michael Bisson, an associate professor of anthropology at McGill University, said there is only about a 10-per-cent chance at best that even a few scraps of any ancient site remains. That’s because big row houses stood there in a more recent past, and digging the foundations for those homes would probably have destroyed what was there.

That doesn’t mean the effort isn’t worth doing, Mr. Bisson said. “You never can tell. Unfortunately, it’s in the middle of a big city. And big cities mean big buildings with deep foundations.”

Mr. Galbraith first became aware of the construction preparations when he was walking past the site late last month. He then began making formal inquiries, even following trucks carrying soil to see where they were dumping the material.

He's no stranger to controversies over historical preservation. As a photojournalist, he has chronicled the destruction of some of the world's most prominent archeological monuments, including Afghanistan's Buddhas of Bamiyan.

"When it comes to history, that's the way I am – I'm a fanatic I guess you could say," Mr. Galbraith explained. "Nobody knows their history. That's part of the problem here. ... We've lost communication with our past."

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/montreal-office-tower-site-may-be-an-aboriginal-burial-ground/article23010796/>

B.C. couple who maintain poaching charges violate aboriginal rights must stand trial

THE CANADIAN PRESS February 17, 2015

KAMLOOPS - A First Nations couple who claim they are being "persecuted for being Indian" must stand trial for alleged poaching offences in B.C., a provincial court judge has ruled.

Jay Coutts and Farah Palmer each face one count of trafficking in wildlife, and Coutts is charged with an additional count of hunting during prohibited hours.

Coutts and Palmer, who allegedly sold deer meat to undercover conservation officers in Cache Creek, are set to go to trial on Sept. 24.

The pair is fighting the charges, saying they violate their aboriginal rights.

In a previous hearing, Coutts said Canada's laws are made "for white people, not native people."

Coutts says aboriginal people have the right to hunt for food and sustenance and that he should be allowed to make his living selling deer meat.

(Kamloops This Week)

Read more:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/couple+maintain+poaching+charges+violate+aboriginal+rights/10820509/story.html#ixzz3S8Prpx00>

Grace Islet First Nations Burial Site To Cost B.C. Taxpayers \$5.5 Million

The Huffington Post B.C. | By [Sara Harowitz](#)

The British Columbia government is paying \$5.45 million to buy a controversial piece of land from a private owner.

The province [revealed the finalized details](#) for Grace Islet, a First Nations burial site, in a news release on Monday. The amount is broken down as \$850,000 for the land and \$4.6 million for businessman Barry Slawsky, who had started to build a retirement home on the property.

"This amount represents costs incurred over the past two decades by the landowner and his lost opportunity for future enjoyment of the property," the government's statement said.

"Incurred costs include items such as utility installation and archaeological, architectural and professional fees; as well as building contract and material costs for construction of a high-end house."

Located off Saltspring Island, Grace Islet is home to at least 16 First Nations burial cairns.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada now owns the title, and will be working with the province and local First Nations to come up with remediation and long-term conservation plans.

When the province [announced in January](#) that it would purchase the land, the move was described as a "big success."

It "marks the start of a long journey towards true respect and reconciliation," Joe Akerman, who runs the Grace Islet Facebook page, told HuffPost B.C. after the announcement.

First Nations are going to hold a reconciliation ceremony in March.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/17/grace-islet-first-nations-burial_n_6699602.html

Northern B.C. First Nations leaders warn they may block rail oil transport

CP February 18, 2015



The Tseil-Waututh and Squamish first nations paddle through what they call the Salish Sea to protest a plan that would bring in more oil tankers in North Vancouver on Saturday, September 01, 2012. First Nations leaders in northern B.C. are threatening to block all attempts to move oil through the province by rail as they explore alternatives. The chiefs say they will meet in the next 30 to 45 days to discuss a plan, adding the railway mode of oil transport is putting their communities and the environment at risk.

PRINCE GEORGE — First Nations leaders in northern B.C. are threatening to block all attempts to move oil through the province by rail as they explore alternatives.

The chiefs say they will meet in the next 30 to 45 days to discuss a plan, adding the railway mode of oil transport is putting their communities and the environment at risk.

Five aboriginal leaders are leading the call to halt oil by rail as they cite the landmark Tsilhqot'in court decision, which they say reinforces the requirement for First Nations to be consulted over the railway in their territory.

Burns Lake Indian Band Chief Dan George said oil by rail is a serious threat and the chiefs feel obligated to explore safer alternatives.

The chiefs are also against the Northern Gateway pipeline proposal, but have agreed to consider Eagle Spirit Energy — a pipeline being pitched by an aboriginal businessman as an alternative.

The new proposal would link Alberta's oilsands to a tanker terminal on the B.C. coast and include a method to refine bitumen to a lighter product.

Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/business/First+Nations+leaders+northern+warn+they+block+rail+transport/10823697/story.html>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

'It's a form of genocide': Hamilton protests aboriginal deaths

Group demands government inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women

[CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 13, 2015 4:10 PM ET Last Updated: Feb 13, 2015 4:10 PM ET

The protest was part of a national campaign dubbed Shut Down Canada, and was held in concert with actions in cities like Vancouver, Edmonton and Halifax.

"It's overdue that we have an inquiry and just stop having consultations," said Sigrid Kneve, a protester who is living in Toronto but is originally from Six Nations. "First Nations people just keep ending up dead or missing."

Last fall, the federal government [committed to a five-year plan to address violence](#) against aboriginal women and girls. The plan flows from the 16 recommendations MPs sitting on the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women made last March.

'I think it's a form of genocide.' - *Sigrid Kneve, protester*

But the Conservative government has so far refused calls for a national public inquiry on the issue. Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in reaction to the recent slaying of Tina Fontaine that the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women was not part of a "sociological phenomenon," but rather a crime and should be treated as such.

Last month, when CBC's Peter Mansbridge asked the prime minister about launching a public inquiry, Harper said "[It isn't high on our radar, to be honest.](#)"

That's just not good enough, Kneve says.

"I think it's a form of genocide. That's all I can say," she said. "They don't care. They really don't care if another First Nations person is found dead. They could care less. That's how I really feel."

In a statement, NDP aboriginal affairs critic Jean Crowder has said it was "unconscionable" for the government to ignore growing calls for a public inquiry.

"It is time for the prime minister and [Aboriginal Affairs Minister] Bernard Valcourt to stop ignoring the sociological phenomenon of missing and murdered indigenous women and take federal action to address the crisis," Crowder said.

Canada's premiers are expected to hold a national roundtable on murdered and missing aboriginal women on Feb. 27 in Ottawa.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/news/it-s-a-form-of-genocide-hamilton-protests-aboriginal-deaths-1.2956980>

'It's up to us to make a difference': Thousands march for missing, murdered aboriginal women

Marlene Leung and Michael Shulman , CTVNews.ca
Published Saturday, February 14, 2015 12:44PM EST
Last Updated Saturday, February 14, 2015 8:24PM EST

Residents across the country participated in marches on Saturday to call for justice for Canada's missing and murdered aboriginal women.

The marches have taken place every Valentine's Day for the past several years.

This year, [events](#) took place in such cities as Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton and Saskatoon. Similar marches were also organized in parts of the U.S.

Hundreds of family and supporters of missing and murdered women gathered at the University of Winnipeg to honour their memories and to call for action.

More than 500 marchers gathered in Toronto outside the city's police headquarters. Many of the demonstrators carried photos and names of the more 1,200 aboriginal women who have been murdered or have gone missing since the 1980s.

This is the tenth year demonstrators have gathered in the city.

Anastasia, a woman of Métis descent, said that people have an obligation to speak out and push for an end to the violence.

"It is up to us to make the difference as a society and stop the violence and the hate crimes," she told CTV Toronto at the protest.

Organizers blamed the government and police for failing to adequately address the issue and implement protections for aboriginal women.

Many demonstrators called for a federal inquiry into the matter.

In Vancouver, hundreds gathered in the city's Downtown Eastside where serial killer Robert Pickton spent years hunting sex workers, the majority of whom were aboriginal.

Aboriginal women in traditional garb played the drums and sang songs as the march made its way through the area.

Family members clutched photos of their lost loved ones and placed roses at the spots where they were killed.

On the [Facebook event page](#) for the Vancouver march, organizers noted that the first Women's Memorial March took place after the 1991 murder of a Coast Salish woman in downtown Vancouver.

"Twenty-five years later, the women's memorial march continues to honour the lives of missing and murdered women," the page said. "Indigenous women disproportionately continue to go missing or be murdered with minimal to no action to address these tragedies or the systemic nature of gendered violence, poverty, racism, or colonialism."

Organizers at the event said they too, will continue to push for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

The Conservative government has been criticized for its refusal to commission such an inquiry.

In a report released last May, the RCMP estimated about 1,200 aboriginal women and girls were murdered or went missing in Canada between 1980 and 2012. It said that while aboriginal women make up 4.3 per cent of the population, they account for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women.

The Conservatives have said that they prefer that the issue be dealt with through the justice system, rather than through a national inquiry.

At a news conference Saturday, Justice Minister Peter MacKay briefly touched on the issue, noting that the government was committed to improving the justice system, particularly the aboriginal justice system.

MacKay also announced the government was extending its support for the Aboriginal Justice Strategy, to include \$11.1 million for the 2016-2017 fiscal year for community-based aboriginal justice programs and initiatives.

"It is an unfortunate reality that aboriginal Canadians are over-represented in our criminal justice system, both as offenders and as victims, and there are many contributing factors that lead to that sad reality," he said.

Body of aboriginal woman found in Calgary yard

The marches coincided with an ongoing police investigation in Calgary into a suspicious death in the city's north-east end.

The body of 31-year-old Dawn Echoes Baptiste was discovered Thursday in Calgary's Whitehorn neighbourhood. Baptiste had no fixed address, officers said.

Police said they received a call about the body Thursday afternoon, and Baptiste was pronounced dead at the scene. The cause of death has not yet been released.

Officers spent Thursday night canvassing the neighbourhood, and interviewed the person who called 911. They said they have no information on a possible motive or what sort of weapon, if any, was used.

Officers are now asking for the public's help in identifying Baptiste's activities in the weeks leading up to her death.

She is described as aboriginal, about 5'5" tall, 135 pounds, with brown hair and blond highlights. At the time of her death, she was wearing a red hooded winter jacket, black sweatpants and tan-coloured work boots.

Anyone with information about the case is being asked to call police at 403-266-1234 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

Read more: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/it-s-up-to-us-to-make-a-difference-thousands-march-for-missing-murdered-aboriginal-women-1.2236413#ixzz3S2mRKRe8>

Red cut-outs aim to bring attention to missing and murdered aboriginal women issue

By [Whitney Stinson](#) Anchor Global News
February 14, 2015 12:06 am



An art project aims to draw attention to missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Life sized red cut-outs around the city are designed to make passers-by think about missing and murdered aboriginal women.

The dozen silhouettes are part of an interactive art installation, where residents are encouraged to tear off a handout with background information.

Organizers chose locations based on foot traffic, and also their symbolic meaning.

“Here outside the courthouse for example,” said Chelsea Taylor who was setting up the art. “We did have one at city hall. This is a decision where every level of government, and decision makers are consistently failing indigenous communities.”

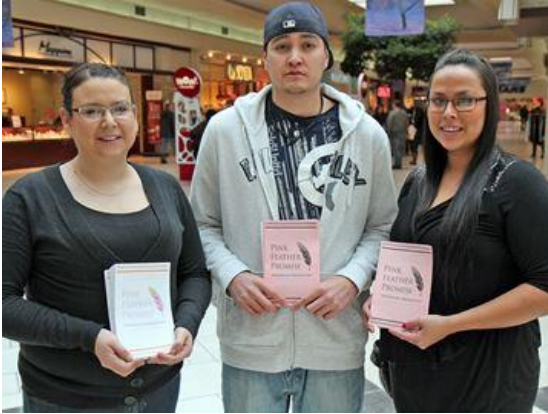
The handouts also provide details on a special vigil being held tomorrow at noon in Dewdney Park.

The vigil comes ahead of the national round table on missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Saskatchewan will be represented by our justice minister.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1830610/red-cut-outs-aim-to-bring-attention-to-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-issue/>

Missing, murdered indigenous women focus of student campaign



Six Nations Polytechnic students, from left, Ashley Lickers, Jesse Sault and Samantha Cook hand out pamphlets for the Pink Feather Promise at Lynden Park Mall on Saturday. The campaign aims to raise awareness of missing and murder indigenous women and funds for their children.

Brant News

By [Brian Shypula](#), Feb 14, 2015

Students from Six Nations Polytechnic and Laurier Brantford have teamed up on a campaign to raise awareness of missing and murdered indigenous women and raise funds for the education of their children.

“Healing the past, helping the future” is the slogan of the campaign, which is called the Pink Feather Promise.

“We’re just trying to raise as much awareness as we can, and if there’s a national inquiry that’s great. But if not we’re at least able to support the children,” said Samantha Cook, who is in the social service work program at Six Nations Polytechnic.

She and fellow students Ashley Lickers and Jesse Sault were handing out Pink Feather Promise flyers at Lynden Park Mall on Saturday alongside another campaign, One Billion Rising, aimed at ending violence against women.

Fundraising would go to support bursaries, scholarships and fellowships for children of missing or murdered indigenous women.

A march for the Pink Feather Promise is being held on March 8 outside the Laurier Brantford Aboriginal Student Centre, 111 Darling Street, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The social services students at Six Nations Polytechnic are working with the social work students at Laurier.

“We need change and hope for our future generations,” Lickers said.

“This is going to be one of our big projects and we’re going to keep on it even after we’re done school,” Cook said.

Lickers said her best friend from kindergarten through high school, Tashina General, was murdered in 2008.

“Today brought a little bit of water to my eyes,” Lickers said, pausing to gain control of her emotions, “but this is good awareness and something that we need to do for the children.”

In 2011, Kent Owen Hill was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 15 years for the second degree murder of General and her unborn child.

Lickers said Hill is her cousin.

“Twelve hundred murdered and missing indigenous women is the tip of an underwater volcano of abuse of native women across the whole country,” said Michael Doxtater, the students’ professor.

If a judicial inquiry were to investigate the western medical system, Doxtater said it would reveal “a lot” of anecdotal evidence from Six Nations around “why auntie or mom or grandma went into the hospital.”

Students involved with the Pink Feather Promise participated in vigils for murdered or missing indigenous women in Toronto, Hamilton and Hagersville this week.

Doxtater lauded students for launching the Pink Feather Promise.

“In 2008 in the apology for Indian residential schools, Stephen Harper said the native people and Canadians would form a new partnership to solve problems. So one of the problems is the survivors of murdered or missing indigenous women,” the professor said.

Direct Link: <http://www.brantnews.com/news-story/5339923-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-focus-of-student-campaign/>

Alert Bay residential school survivors celebrate demolition

**"It represented all that was wrong with Canada during that time,"
Chief Robert Joseph**

By All Points West, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 15, 2015 6:00 AM PT Last Updated: Feb 15, 2015 9:45 AM PT

Residential school survivors and Anglican church leaders will soon gather in Alert Bay, a remote village on an island off the north coast of Vancouver Island, to watch the demolition of a residential school.

St. Michael's Indian Residential School closed in 1974, but 40 years later the building still exists. For many, it's a reminder of a painful past that will finally be gone.

"It was a foreboding presence," said Robert Joseph, hereditary chief of the Gwawaenuk First Nation and a founder of Reconciliation Canada.

"It represented all that was wrong with Canada during that time and all that was terrible between First Nations people and other Canadians."

Joseph attended St. Michael's as a child and will be there to see it demolished on Feb. 18.

Inter-generational harm and trauma

Canada's residential school system took aboriginal children away from their families and their communities and forbade them from speaking their languages and practising their culture.

"They were intended to totally assimilate aboriginal children because we were less than human," said Joseph.

"At the end of it all, most aboriginal children suffered deep harm and trauma, generation after generation."

As the main organizer of the event, Joseph has been busy phoning coastal tribal groups from all along the West Coast. He expects there will be hundreds going to the small island to take part in the ceremony.

The celebrations will begin at the local big house (sometimes known in other parts of B.C. as a long house) the night before, where tribal groups will share each other's cultures.

Apologies and reconciliation

Prior to the demolition the next day, participants will hear speakers, including government and church officials.

"We're going to have huge banners of those apologies reminding the survivors and others that the church and the state have acknowledged that they did wrong," said Joseph.

He said there are some in the community who are still very angry and won't be pleased to see church and government leaders at the event.

"Reconciliation begins there, with our differences," said Joseph. "Together they have to walk with us in a new way forward that brings about healing and of course the potential for reconciliation."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/alert-bay-residential-school-survivors-celebrate-demolition-1.2954344>

Ken S. Coates: Aboriginal women deserve much more than an inquiry

[Ken S. Coates, National Post](#) | February 16, 2015 12:35 PM ET

For every story like that of Tina Fontaine, the murdered Aboriginal teenager from Winnipeg whose case made the national news last summer, there are dozens more like it across the country that go largely unnoticed. In Aboriginal communities and urban centres alike, Indigenous women live with constant danger. The demand from Aboriginal peoples and many other Canadians for a national inquiry into missing and murdered women springs from this painful reality.

Thousands of aboriginal Canadians and their supporters are planning rallies, protests and blockades across the country Friday in a campaign dubbed “#ShutDownCanada.”

A Facebook page indicates more than 6,700 followers intend to take part, with more than 20 events planned for across Canada, including in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Halifax.

“The system has failed us all miserably,” reads the Facebook page, which states it is hosted by “In Solidarity with all Land Defenders.” “There is no democracy and we the people have an obligation to demand justice for all.”

A recent conversation I had with a prominent Aboriginal woman leader in Saskatchewan made this clear. While she wasn’t sure about the need for an inquiry, she knew her community needed something. Violence against women was widespread and getting worse. The women were vulnerable and violence was growing, not declining. The police had too few officers and too many cases. Social and mental services could not match demand.

Women fled for the safety of nearby cities only to discover that their vulnerability came with them. She had no answers. She wanted to know that Canadians and their governments shared her frustrations and her worries about her community. Why, she wondered, did the country do so little when the problems were so obvious?

Aboriginal women, including those asking for an inquiry, know this issue all too well. They do not actually need an investigation to reveal the bitter truths about sexual violence, domestic abuse, or the racially driven violence directed at Indigenous women in

cities. They know that most of the violence is Native to Native, and they suffer along with the men in their communities. What they do not understand is the refusal of general public and governments to declare the violence, murders and disappearances to be a national emergency.

Launching an official inquiry is no assurance of a positive and constructive outcome. As Aboriginal peoples discovered, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in the mid 1990s did not result in dramatic changes in public policy. Did the outcomes of the Gomery Commission into the Sponsorship Scandal justify the price tag in the tens of millions?

Those with technical mandates – the Royal Commission on the Canadian blood system or the Dubin Inquiry into the use of performance enhancing drugs are good examples – can direct policy-makers to more constructive approaches. In general, however, inquiries take a long time, cost a lot of money, and result in fewer improvements than desired. And they can delay political and administrative action.

If a single program, law, regulation or policy would solve this complex problem, it would have been enacted by now. Deeply seated issues take decades to undo. The very least all Canadians can do is to ensure that Aboriginal women, victims or potential victims of violence and abuse, know that there is now a collective commitment to addressing both the immediate and the underlying issues.

There is much that can be done. Government leaders – federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal – should declare their commitment to giving higher priority to missing and murdered Aboriginal women, to making improvements in social services for Aboriginal families at risk, and to working with Aboriginal governments to identify special actions of high potential. Winnipeg, for example, has conceded that the police have to give more attention to their approach to missing Indigenous women.

First Nations can likewise hold community meetings to determine women's sense of safety and vulnerability. Speaking about the issue out loud is a crucial first step. Urban service organizations can do a collective audit of need, services provided and outcomes. In some communities, anti-gang measures are urgently required. In others, actions to control drinking and domestic violence are the highest priority.

There are no global solutions. Much of this is at the community level. Inside Aboriginal homes, where family lives have been devastated by decades of bad public policy, there are too many ill-treated children, over-crowded rooms, poor nutrition and signs of the ravages of serial unemployment and diminished cultural values.

Inquiry or not, Canada will not come out of this necessary national reconciliation unscathed. We must look hard at the long-term effects of racism, colonialism, residential schools, the Indian Act and government paternalism. Male power in Aboriginal communities will come under scrutiny, adding to local tensions.

As the country opens its eyes, it will no longer wonder why there is so much violence against women. One hopes that Canadians will wonder instead why they have not – as individuals, churches, community groups, governments, charities and others – done more. This pattern of pain and suffering diminishes each and every Canadian.

Aboriginal women in this country deserve far more than an inquiry. They deserve the right to live safely, in their homes, communities and cities, with dignity and respect from all. This is what they have deserved for generations. Surely this rich, compassionate and justice-seeking country can give it to them now.

National Post

Ken S. Coates is Canada Research Chair in Regional Innovation, Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Saskatchewan, and a Senior Fellow with the Macdonald-Laurier Institute (macdonaldlaurier.ca).

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/02/16/ken-s-coates-aboriginal-women-deserve-much-more-than-an-inquiry/>

Inquiry won't solve problem of missing women

By [Lorne Gunter](#), QMI Agency

First posted: Monday, February 16, 2015 07:32 PM MST | Updated: Tuesday, February 17, 2015 07:17 AM MST

On Saturday, nearly 100 people paraded solemnly from Sacred Heart Church of the First Peoples on 96 Street to city hall. They were part of the 10th Annual Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Women.

I truly feel sorry for every one of them who has lost a daughter, sister or friend to violence. Many marched while carrying or wearing photographs of their lost loved ones. As a father and brother, it is hard to imagine anything more gut wrenching.

Some also waved placards demanding “Justice for Missing and Murdered Women,” specifically aboriginal women. Similar demands were made in marches in another dozen locations around the country.

Such demands have become a fashionable cause. They are an outgrowth of the same political and ideological currents that spawned the Idle No More movement two winters ago. And they are based on the assumption (largely false) that Canadian society is inherently racist and, as a result, is uncaring about the murders and disappearances of aboriginal women.

It's tough to speak to the wrongheadedness of the demands for a national inquiry without seeming to dismiss the personal tragedies suffered by the families of those victims who have been killed or disappeared. Indeed, marches such as the one on Saturday can have a healing effect for some.

Still, a national inquiry would only serve to perpetuate the myth that aboriginal women are commonly the victims of racism and we non-aboriginals just don't care.

The numbers simply do not back up these activist-generated claims.

Last spring, the RCMP released a national study of crime statistics going back to 1980. The study was undertaken at the request of RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson based on the growing demand by activists, opposition politicians and "progressive" journalists for a national inquiry.

The study found that "aboriginal women are over-represented among Canada's murdered and missing women." But aboriginal men are even more over-represented.

Where the race of a murder victim was noted over the past three decades, 14 per cent of the female victims were First Nations. That is more than three times the four per cent of Canadian women who are aboriginal.

But aboriginal men make up 17 per cent of male murder victims versus their same four per cent of the male population. This means the problem of missing and murdered aboriginals is not a uniquely female problem.

Nor are police and the greater Canadian society ignoring these murders and disappearances. It is not the case that aboriginal lives do not matter.

The "solve rate" in the murders of aboriginal women and non-aboriginal women is virtually identical 88 per cent versus 89 per cent.

The other thing the RCMP found is that the murderers of aboriginal women are almost always aboriginal men. Aboriginal women are not going missing and winding up dead primarily at the hands of white pimps, johns and drug dealers – although that is the impression those pushing for an inquiry would wish us to swallow.

Yet, why oppose a national inquiry? Wouldn't an inquiry expose the truth that missing and murdered First Nation women are not victims of a racist society and uncaring police and justice system?

I doubt it.

A national roundtable or inquiry would seek to point fingers at everyone else. It would likely enter its investigations with preconceived opinions of what it would find.

It would mostly likely blame the plight of First Nations on external factors (you and me and the rest of non-aboriginal society), on racism, discrimination, misunderstanding of aboriginal culture by the courts, substance abuse, removal of children by social workers and, of course, on the catchall of residential schools.

The problem of missing and murdered aboriginal women will not change until First Nations acknowledge the dysfunctional nature of too much of their culture. But a national inquiry would never say that.

Direct Link: <http://www.edmontonsun.com/2015/02/16/inquiry-wont-solve-problem-of-missing-women>

Roundtable on the issue of murdered and missing indigenous women aims to start 'national dialogue'

[Sarah Boesveld](#) | February 17, 2015 | Last Updated: Feb 17 9:06 PM ET

Aileen Joseph sat in her daughter's Hamilton, Ont. apartment more than a decade ago and implored her "Why do you stay here?" She didn't get answer, and the silence broke her heart.

At 40 years old, Shelley Joseph had four children and no self-esteem, her mother said. She was an alcoholic and fell in with the "wrong people" — including an ex-partner, who would beat her to death in those very same rooms one July night.

Fifteen months later Shelley's son, beset with other problems and unable to cope with his mother's death, took his own life.

"He offed himself in my husband's woodshed," Ms. Joseph said.

Since 2006 the Six Nations woman and her husband have heard stories strikingly similar to theirs from families nationwide. Late next week, she plans to take her story to Ottawa, where an unprecedented gathering of federal ministers, premiers, indigenous leaders and families like hers will meet for a National Roundtable on the issue of murdered and missing indigenous women.

The Feb. 27 roundtable will be the first time this many leaders with this much influence are meeting to tackle this long-running and multi-layered issue.

Federal Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch has confirmed attendance along with Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt. Premiers from all 13 provinces and territories will also be there. The Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Native Women's Association of Canada and four other national indigenous

groups will bring about 10 delegates each from across the country. And a few chosen families will have a seat at the table, while many more — like Ms. Joseph and her husband — plan to be there to show their support.

The roundtable is designed to set a “national dialogue” on how to address this issue, but also lay the groundwork for a national inquiry into the murdered and missing — a goal being pursued by newly elected AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde and others.

The Feb. 27 meeting will be a “push for a coordinated action plan and implementation strategy to get to the root causes,” he told the *National Post* in an interview. “But we’re still going to push for a national inquiry.”

The AFN will be putting forward “specific commitments” on prevention and awareness, community safety plans and protocols and policing measures and justice responses.

The point of the roundtable is to “coordinate actions to prevent, address and end violence against indigenous women and girls” which has led to the 1,181 murdered and missing women counted by the RCMP in its landmark report last May.

“The roundtable itself is a beginning, not an end,” National Chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples Betty Ann Lavallée wrote in an email to the *Post*. “I hope it will lead to establishing a constructive dialogue, allow us all to explore the issues, sort out fact from fiction, and identify a concrete and coordinated way forward.”

Housing and poverty are high on her radar, as those concerns seem to “underlie” many of the tragedies related to murdered and missing women, she said.

At the heart of it all, said National Chief Bellegarde, is healing the effects of colonialism.

“It takes one or two generations to get really healthy again but we need to start dealing with getting the wellness centres in our communities to deal with some of the root causes,” he said, adding that he’ll make a pitch for more of those at the national roundtable.

Wellness centres would address the needs of the whole family, he said, hopefully helping to stem some of the domestic violence that affects both men and women.

For years, the Native Women’s Association of Canada has led the “hard conversations” about the roots of this violence, said interim president Dawn Harvard. They’ll carry that experience to the roundtable next Friday.

“I know there have been some concerns about whether a roundtable was a cop-out,” she said. “But you can’t have a conversation with someone if they can’t sit at the table with you. The fact that we’re even sitting at the table, that’s got our foot in the door to start having meaningful conversation and hopefully turning the tide on this.”

NWAC wants to see a focus on education, employment and housing.

While they won't drop their call for a national inquiry, Ms. Harvard said NWAC is open to any commitments to ramping up services that the federal and provincial leaders want to make.

Aileen Joseph believes access to a good crisis program might have given her daughter the self-confidence to lift her out of addiction and an abusive situation. She's skeptical a national inquiry will help, but these kinds of services, she said, could go a long way.

For now, she and her husband live with the guilt of not being able to save their daughter.

"It's always there," she said. "You can't forget what happened."

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/02/17/roundtable-on-the-issue-of-murdered-and-missing-indigenous-women-aims-to-start-national-dialogue/>

A Memorial March Honored Canada's Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

February 18, 2015

By [Sarah Berman](#)



A march memorializing the missing and murdered indigenous women of Canada.

This article originally appeared on VICE Canada.

At Canada's largest and longest-running memorial march for murdered and missing aboriginal women, Lorelei Williams lighted a candle to honor her murdered cousin and her missing aunt.

"I come for my missing auntie Belinda Williams. She's been missing since 1977—she's still missing today," said Williams. "And for my cousin Tanya Holyk. She went missing in 1996—her DNA was later found on Robert Pickton's farm. That's who I come for, that's why I do the march."

The annual ceremony draws attention to the fact indigenous women are nearly four times more likely to be murdered in Canada than non-indigenous women. On February 14, Williams joined a chorus of thousands attending marches across the country, all calling for public inquiry into the crisis.

"There's a war on our women, and it needs to be dealt with," she said.

Now in its 25th year, the walk circles Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, scattering tobacco, roses, and the smell of smudged sweetgrass where women have been lost or killed. Red roses tell a story of a murder; yellow ones denote a missing person. Elders lead prayer and song, while survivors of violence, addiction, poverty, and systemic racism share personal stories with the crowd.

"This is my only daughter," a mother announces to onlookers, holding a large photograph of Cassandra Antone, killed in 1997. "I'll never get to see her wedding."

Calls for an inquiry have grown stronger since an [RCMP report released last year](#) confirmed significantly higher rates of violence toward aboriginal women and girls. News of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine's [unsolved murder](#) last summer, followed by the [brutal assault](#) of 16-year-old Rinelle Harper in December, sparked protest and debate in Winnipeg (where both crimes occurred) and across the country.

But Canada's governmental leadership has so far dismissed this long-simmering movement. In December, Prime Minister Stephen Harper told CBC's Peter Mansbridge a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls "[isn't really high on our radar, to be honest](#)."

Harper told Mansbridge the phenomenon has already been studied, and that resources should go toward preventing and punishing crime instead. British Columbia's government funded its own inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women in 2011, which found [racism, sexism, and critical police failures](#) marred many local investigations.

"He really needs to give his head a shake," Williams says of Harper, adding a national inquiry should be high on his list of priorities. On each arm she wears photos of her lost

family members. "We really need to get to the root causes of why this is happening to our women across Canada."

For indigenous families impacted by [Canada's most high-profile serial killer, Robert Pickton](#), justice and closure remains elusive. Michele Pineault, whose daughter Stephanie Lane was also identified on Pickton's Port Coquitlam farm, recently learned that BC coroners had been keeping her daughter's partial remains in storage since 2003.

"To have your daughter's skeletal remains returned 11 and a half years later, it's an injustice," Pineault says of the coroner's "oversight." At the time of the trial, investigators told her there wasn't enough DNA for a murder charge to hold up in court. "There are families now wondering if what they've buried is even their family members."

If such mistakes could happen following the largest crime scene investigation in Canadian history, Williams worries about what that means for smaller, less publicized cases. "When I found out there was new evidence I was so shocked," she said. "How many more cases can be solved if they'd just looked in their storage lockers?"

Vancouver's indigenous women continue to march every year so these missteps are not forgotten. But in sharing all this pain, many also begin to find peace and solidarity.

"When we connect we're actually healing," Williams said. "I never used to be able to do a whole walk... I would maybe come down for half an hour or an hour, and it was too overwhelming for me.

"Now that I have a lot of support and other family members I can do the whole walk," she added. "We're here together, raising awareness of this issue so it doesn't happen to any other families."

Follow Sarah Berman on [Twitter](#).

Direct Link: <http://www.vice.com/read/reporting-from-canadas-largest-memorial-march-honouring-murdered-and-missing-indigenous-women-958>

Aboriginal group says 'no thanks' to Brazeau's offer of help

QMI Agency

Feb 18, 2015

, Last Updated: 3:51 PM ET

A prominent aboriginal rights organization is saying thanks, but no thanks, to an offer of help from disgraced senator Patrick Brazeau.

"Victims and families deserve more than an accused abuser as an advocate," Deputy Grand Chief Denise Stonefish, of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI), said [in a statement](#) Wednesday.

Brazeau, 40, was charged with assault and sexual assault after police were called to his Gatineau, Que., home in February 2013 because of a domestic disturbance. It's the same home police were called to in April 2014, when he was charged with assaulting a woman.

He was suspended from the Senate in November 2013 after he was charged with fraud and breach of trust over his housing expenses.

Late last month, after posting an article on the website Loonie Politics calling for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, the @senatorbrazeau Twitter account posted: "Open to doing volunteer work on Aboriginal issues. Fed election coming up and FN issues need 2 B @ forefront."

The AIAI isn't interested.

"While I understand that Mr. Brazeau has a right to his day in court, and I believe in the rehabilitative nature of volunteer work, I find it seriously troubling that as an accused abuser he thinks it is appropriate to advocate for and work with victims and their families," Stonefish's statement said.

The AIAI is a provincial non-profit organization with a mandate to "defend and enhance the indigenous and treaty rights" of its members, which it says includes 20,000 First Nations citizens in Ontario.

Direct Link: <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2015/02/18/22243506.html>

Special Topic: Residential Schools

Martinuk: Money can't buy healing for Canada's aboriginals

[Susan Martinuk More from Susan Martinuk](#)

Published on: February 13, 2015 Last Updated: February 13, 2015 3:00 AM MST

On Jan. 7, 1998, Canadians cheered as Jane Stewart, then-Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, delivered a seemingly all-encompassing statement of reconciliation to Canada's aboriginal peoples.

The statement was offered as a means of “moving forward together in a process of renewal,” and expressed “profound regret for past actions.” It said “we are deeply sorry.”

It acknowledged that past policies had “(weakened) the identity of Aboriginal peoples, (suppressed) their languages and cultures, and (outlawed) spiritual practices.”

It discussed the residential school system and policies that “separated children from their families and communities and prevented them from speaking their own languages and from learning about their heritage and culture.” It also stated that “policies that sought to assimilate Aboriginal people ... were not the way to build a strong country.”

The mea culpa seemed all-inclusive and offered \$350 million for aboriginal healing. Phil Fontaine, then-national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, acknowledged it as a “historic break from the past” and accepted the apology on behalf of his people.

The adversarial relationship between aboriginals and government then continued as if nothing had happened.

Fast forward to 2008, when Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered Canada’s apology to former students of the Indian residential schools. He addressed the deplorable attitudes that existed, recognized that assimilation had caused great harm and said it was “wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions.” There was plenty of talk about moving forward together in a new relationship.

So we did — in the courtrooms of the nation. Canada offered \$1.9 billion for the courts to carve up, and initiated a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

But money didn’t heal the wounds or initiate a new beginning. The only people who benefited were the lawyers.

Regina lawyer Tony Merchant represented large numbers of victims and bragged on multiple occasions that the lawsuits could result in as much as \$100 million in legal fees.

In 2005, the group claimed \$80 million in fees. The federal government balked when an initial audit listed 57,000 entries that were questionable. As a result, the courts ordered the government to pay Merchant \$25 million, while forensic auditors sorted the mess out and ruled that, once complete, Merchant’s total compensation could be no more than \$40 million.

Fast forward to January 2015, a busy time for process servers in both Regina and Ottawa. The federal government launched a lawsuit against Merchant’s firm for “a scheme to deceive and defraud Canada” through fraudulent billing practices. Merchant’s law firm then countersued, claiming the federal government still owes it \$15 million.

In this midst of all this, almost unnoticed, Merchant has filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Saskatchewan aboriginals who were adopted by white parents (under the

encouragement of state policy) and allegedly suffered cultural genocide, physical, sexual and psychological abuse. It follows similar lawsuits already launched in Ontario and B.C.

In doing so, Merchant commented on the past government policies that were “paternalistic” and meant to “turn red children into white adults.” Thousands of aboriginals have lost touch with their cultural roots and, of course, say they want an apology and the recognition that their traumas were just as significant as those who attended residential schools.

We can all see where this is going. Both aboriginals and non-aboriginals are being blindly led by the mistaken belief (likely driven by the lawyers) that an apology and a financial settlement will heal all and lead Canada’s government and its First Nations in “a new way forward, together.”

The truth is that it’s been more than acknowledged that, decades ago, Canada had reprehensible aboriginal policies. Repeated apologies have been made. There have been cash and several commissions. Yet all of this has only further battered the relationship between government and First Nations, and fuelled the bitterness.

We can’t keep doing this for every grievance. The legal system doesn’t bring healing.

Susan Martinuk is a Western Canada-based writer. Her column appears every Friday.

Direct Link: <http://calgaryherald.com/opinion/columnists/martinuk-money-cant-buy-healing-for-canadas-aboriginals>

First Nations to gather for demolition of residential school

St. Michael’s residential school was opened in 1929

[Renee Bernard](#) February 13, 2015 11:00 pm

ALERT BAY (NEWS1130) – They’re calling it a day to say goodbye to a dark shadow on the landscape and on Canadian lives.

This coming Wednesday a special ceremony will mark the beginning of the demolition of [St. Michael’s Indian Residential School](#) in Alert Bay, off the coast of Vancouver Island.

“In a very symbolic way, this is going to help us liberate ourselves from a haunting past,” says Chief Dr. Robert Joseph, a St. Michael’s survivor and [Reconciliation Canada Ambassador](#).

The Anglican-church run school was opened in 1929 and closed in the 1970s. It housed 200 children every year.

St. Michael's doesn't have the ominous reputation that other residential schools, such as the Alberni Indian Residential School, have. Alberni is associated with dorm supervisor Arthur Plint who was jailed for 18 counts of indecent assault dating from 1948 to 1953 and from 1963 to 1968.

But Joseph says every residential school symbolizes a sad childhood.

"There was never a saving grace to take little children from their homes and destroy their languages and culture and to remove them from the influence of their parents and their natural community."

Joseph was six when he started school there. He's now 75.

He says Wednesday's ceremony will entail a survival prayer, a moment of silence and a sacred flame, into which people can toss their personal messages.

He suggests many people will be throwing their student numbers into the fire, because they used to be known by their numbers rather than their names.


"It's a historic moment that belongs to all of us. We should take it for what it is. It can be a moment to acknowledge our past. We made some mistakes, but we can look forward to the future together."

The First Nations community is hoping some sort of monument will be built once the school is torn down.

Direct Link: <http://www.news1130.com/2015/02/13/first-nations-to-gather-for-demolition-of-residential-school/>

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

7 States Where There Are Fights To Change 'Deeply Offensive' Native American Mascots

by [Travis Waldron](#)  Posted on February 13, 2015 at 11:42 am Updated: February 13, 2015 at 4:05 pm

As activists continue their fight to change the name of Washington’s professional football team, calling “Redskins” a “dictionary-defined” racial slur that has no place in the sports lexicon, similar mascots are also facing challenges at the high school level across the country.

At the pro level, Washington’s continued use of “Redskins” was a [source of protest](#) at games throughout the 2014 NFL season, and it faced [more demonstrations](#) at the Super Bowl in February. But Native American mascots have been a source of controversy for years at the high school and collegiate level too, with Native Americans who are opposed to the names saying they foster stereotypes that are harmful to their communities (the [American Sociological Association](#) and [American Psychological Association](#) have agreed, calling for the “immediate retirement” of such mascots).

Those efforts have led to name and mascot changes at prominent colleges and in high schools for decades, and in the early months of 2015, schools in at least seven states are facing similar challenges, including state legislation, school board reviews, and efforts from Native American students to force changes.

California: On Wednesday, the John Swett Unified School District Board voted to change the name of the John Swett High School Indians, [CBS San Francisco reported](#). The Bay Area school has not chosen a new nickname, but its decision came a year after a school in Vallejo decided to quit using its “Apaches” nickname and mascot. Local activists told CBS that they planned to ask another school, Napa High School, to stop using its “Indians” name next.

In December, state Assembly member Luis Alejo (D) [introduced legislation](#) that would require schools to end the use of the name “Redskins” by 2017. School officials in some districts have attempted to [rally opposition](#) against that legislation — in Gustine, for instance, school officials [organized a community hearing](#) this week meant to help save the name of the Gustine High School Redskins. Alejo’s legislation would apply to four California schools.



Loveland High School may have to change its “Indians” nickname under new legislation.

Colorado: State Rep. Joe Salazar (D) this month introduced legislation that would put schools that still use Native American mascots under the review of local tribes and a state commission, [The Coloradoan reported](#). If the bill passes, Native American mascots would need approval from the state's tribes or from the newly-formed commission or else they would have to be changed. It would apply to 48 Colorado schools, including the Loveland High School Indians and Eaton High School Reds, according to The Coloradoan. Loveland school officials have already reached out to the local Lakota Sioux tribe to create a new mascot to "make sure that we are honoring with our Indian logo," the school's principal told [the Loveland Reporter-Herald](#). Salazar introduced similar legislation in 2014 and, according to Indian Country Today Media Network, [received hate mail for doing so](#).

Connecticut: The West Hartford school district held a town meeting Thursday to debate the mascots of two local high schools, the Conard High School Chieftains and Hall High School Warriors. "We always strive to be of a Chieftain and do things as chieftains would: be courageous on sports fields and in classrooms," one Conard student said at the meeting to defend the name, [NBC Connecticut reported](#). "The feeling isn't going to go away just because you change some logo," a student opposed to the name countered.

North Haven High School, which uses the name "Indians," has also faced challenges to its name: a [change.org petition drive](#), which started in January, so far has 731 signatures. Quinnipiac University, located in North Haven, [changed its nickname](#) from the "Braves" to the "Bobcats" in 2001.

Maine: This week, the president of the local NAACP chapter wrote to school officials at Skowhegan High School in Bangor, asking them to consider dropping the school's Indians mascot and logo. "The implications of cultural violence embedded in Skowhegan High School's nickname and mascot are deeply offensive to native people," president Michael Alpert wrote, [CentralMaine.com reported](#). Skowhegan is the "only school left in Maine using a Native American nickname and mascot," according to journalist, author, and college professor Ed Rice, who has [advocated for changing it](#). Other schools still use names like "Warriors" but have abandoned Native American imagery and logos. A former chief of the local Penobscot tribe has also pushed for Skowhegan to change its name.



Banks High School in Oregon could lose its “Braves” nickname under state Board of Education rules.

Oregon: The state Board of Education [banned](#) all schools from using Native American mascots in 2012, requiring them to adopt new nicknames and logos by 2017. The original legislation bans names like “Redskins,” “Savages,” “Indians,” “Chiefs” and “Braves,” but others, like “Warriors” could be used without a logo depicting Native Americans, according to [the Philomath Express](#).

But last year, Gov. John Kitzhaber (D) signed new legislation allowing schools that had the permission of local tribes to continue using such names. In January, officials formed a working group to figure out how exactly the permission rule would work, [the Statesman Journal reported](#), and a public hearing on the process is scheduled for later this month. The proposed rule change would also require schools that enter into agreements with tribes to “include a plan to address achievement gaps between Native American students and other students,” [according to The Oregonian](#). There are currently 15 high schools using Native American nicknames and mascots statewide.

South Dakota: Students on the Lake Traverse Reservation this month asked the Sisseton School District to change the name of the Sisseton High School Redmen, [the Associated Press reported](#). The students, a group of girls’ basketball players who formerly attended Sisseton High, have held a rally and planned other events aimed at changing the name, and a group opposed to the mascot demonstrated against it at a recent basketball game between Sisseton and Tiospa Zina, a tribal school, [according to KDLT News](#). One of the Tiospa Zina students who was passing out t-shirts that read “Not Your Mascot” [told another local news station](#) that Sisseton students confronted him and started a fight in a bathroom during the game.

Wisconsin: At an end of January school board meeting, officials [voted to maintain](#) the name of the Berlin High School Indians after 92 percent of the local community and 90 percent of the student population voted in favor of keeping the name in a local survey. The debate over Berlin’s name began in 2011 when a graduate of the school filed a complaint at the state level, according to the local Fox affiliate. In 2013, though, Gov. Scott Walker (R) [signed a law](#) that made it harder to change such nicknames. According to the Wisconsin Indian Education Association, which in February 2014 [sent a letter to school districts](#) asking them to stop using Native American mascots and nicknames, 31 such mascots are still in use in the state.

Earlier this month, University of Wisconsin point guard Bronson Koenig, a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation, [said](#) he was “disappointed” that Native American mascots are still in use because they make “people think it’s OK to make fun of us.”

Direct Link: <http://thinkprogress.org/sports/2015/02/13/3622788/efforts-change-deeply-offensive-native-american-mascots-continue-across-us/>

Native American School Building Won't Get Landmark Status, Will Be Demolished

[Richard Walker](#)

2/13/15

In July, the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board voted 7-1 to designate as a landmark a public school with strong ties to Seattle's Native American community. Supporters thought the school was thus saved from demolition.

Landmarks Preservation Board coordinator Erin Doherty said at the time, "It is rare to demolish a landmark."

Rare, yes, but not forbidden.

Seattle Public Schools is moving ahead with plans to demolish the 60-year-old school to make way for construction of a new elementary school and middle school. That's because three months after the landmark designation, the Landmarks Preservation Board voted 7-3 with one abstention to impose "no controls" on the designation, meaning the school district could proceed with plans to demolish the school.

The school, formerly Wilson-Pacific Elementary and Middle School, housed different programs, among them American Indian Heritage School, which at one time offered college courses and had 100 percent high school graduation and college attendance rates.

The school is also located on the site of Licton Spring, which is of historical importance to the Duwamish people; is the site of Native-themed murals by Apache/Haida artist Andrew Morrison; and is the center for afterschool cultural and athletic programs for Seattle's Native American youth.

The school district and Mahlum Architects plan to save the murals, incorporating the walls into the new buildings; and the middle school grounds will have a ceremonial circle. In addition, Licton Springs K-8—a merger of American Indian Heritage School and a social justice program at another school site—is expected to move to the new school when it is finished in 2017.

But Native education advocates say that's not enough. They mourn the loss of buildings that have been an important urban Native gathering place. And they fear that the loss continues a pattern that began with the dismantling of American Indian Heritage School, the dispersion of its students to other schools, and the impending relocation of afterschool cultural and athletic programs.

In its February newsletter, the Urban Native Education Alliance reported that its youth programs at the old American Indian Heritage School site—Clear Sky Native Youth Council, Native Warriors basketball program, and a wellness program—would be "displaced," calling it "history repeating itself time and time again."

“UNEA continue[s] to stand firm in our opposition to the [Seattle Public Schools’] handling of the demolition. It is a sorrowful time to see the legacy, institutional history and the extermination of our presence being so callously managed.” (UNEA later announced that its programs would move to Nathan Hale High School on February 27.)

Duwamish Tribe Chairwoman Cecile Hansen, great-great-grandniece of the City of Seattle’s namesake, has spoken publicly in opposition to the school’s demolition.

“To have the whole complex erased from the land,” she lamented. “It’s an important place. Licton Springs is part of our traditional grounds. To erase this one little place in this city ... Doesn’t ‘landmark preservation’ mean ‘to save’? I question [the preservation board’s] integrity.”

Hansen said the school, as a gathering place for the Native community and the former home of the once very successful American Indian Heritage School, is one of few Native landmarks in the city. Besides those landmarks—among them Chief Seattle Club, Daybreak Star, the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center, and the school—“there’s nothing else in the city,” she said.

Advocates for saving the American Indian Heritage School buildings say renovation would cost copy9.1 million; the district plans to spend \$71.6 million to build the new middle school and \$44.7 million on the new elementary school.

But the district says the new schools are needed to accommodate student population growth—the schools will accommodate 1,650 students, according to district documents. Wilson-Pacific accommodated 1,347 in its peak enrollment year.

And there’s Wilson-Pacific’s condition. Enrollment declined through the 1970s, reaching just over 550 students by the 1977-78 school year. From 1979, on the school was re-purposed for a series of special programs; American Indian Heritage School opened there in 1989. But over the years, the maintenance backlog grew.

In a November 2012 report by its “Problem Solvers” reporting team, KOMO-TV Channel 4 News reported a school “in disrepair with serious safety concerns.” Among the deficiencies: buckled and breaking concrete, floors and ceilings in disrepair, rotting wood in walls, asbestos warnings plastered on pipes, electrical and phone lines dangling in the air.

The school district reported on its [website](#), “Seattle Public Schools looked at several options to develop the property that retained a portion of the landmark building. Unfortunately, none of those options met the educational specifications. Accordingly, it has been determined to be necessary to replace the existing building with a new structure.”

UNEA Wants School Named After Eaglestaff

According to a public notice published by the school district, demolition of Wilson-Pacific is expected to begin in April; construction of the new elementary and middle schools is expected to be completed in March 2017.

Meanwhile, UNEA continues to advocate for the naming of one of the new middle schools after the late Robert Eaglestaff, Minneconjou Lakota, principal of American Indian Heritage School from 1989-1996, its period of greatest success. The school's association with Eaglestaff figured into its designation as a landmark; at the time, Doherty, the preservation board coordinator, said the school met two of six criteria for landmark designation: it is "associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the history of the City" (Eaglestaff); it is "associated in a significant way with a significant aspect of the cultural, political, or economic heritage of the community."

In a December 5 letter to UNEA, Seattle Schools Superintendent Larry Nyland wrote that the district will "give serious consideration to your naming request ... I do hear your request and rationale that [the] site itself has significance as a Native American gathering point; and Robert Eaglestaff did much to preserve and develop Native American heritage at this site."

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/13/native-american-school-building-wont-get-landmark-status-will-be-demolished-159122>

Nebraska Gun Laws: How Do State Laws Apply on Native American Reservations?

Thursday, 12 Feb 2015 08:14 PM

By Spencer Durrant

With changes coming to many regulations regarding gun laws across the country, staying informed on the changes is a smart thing to do. Nebraska gun laws are up for debate in the state legislature as it commences its 2015 session, and that will inevitably lead to questions about how Nebraska gun laws apply to Native American reservations.

Across America, most Native American reservations reserve sovereignty and that manifests itself greatly when it comes to handling firearms on Native American lands.

For the most part, Nebraska state gun laws have no effect on tribal lands. The Supreme Court has declared that Native American reservations across the nation have tribal sovereignty.

Most tribes on the reservations will establish their own rules and laws via a tribal council,

as can be seen when looking at their specific laws.

Nebraska has many different Native American tribes, and as such, the rules on each tribe's reservation are different.

Some examples of the laws are as follows, [according to Handgunlaw.us](#):

- The Fort Belknap Tribe classifies carrying a concealed weapon such as any dirk, dagger, pistol, revolver, slingshot, sword, Billy club, or knuckles as a Class 2 offense, and shall be fined no more than \$500.
- However, the Confederated Tribes of Salish and Kootenai have exceptions to the concealed carry laws. While these tribes' stance on concealed weapons is the same as the Fort Belknap Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Salish and Kootenai provide exceptions to citizens who are law enforcement officers of the Tribes, authorized by a judge of the Tribal Court to carry a weapon, a person permitted under state law to carry a concealed weapon, or carrying arms on the premises of one's own home or business.
- While some of the Nebraska gun laws don't apply to all Native American reservations, citizens who are properly licensed can carry their concealed weapons on the lands of the Confederated Tribes of Salish and Kootenai. Staying informed on the laws will definitely benefit those who are looking to carry weapons on Native American land.

This article does not constitute legal advice. Check the current gun laws before purchasing or traveling with a firearm.

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Idaho Gun Laws: How Do State Laws Apply on Native American Reservations?



Iconic view of the Sawtooth mountains in Idaho. (Dollarphotoclub)

Friday, 13 Feb 2015 08:02 PM

By Eva Gordon

Hunting and fishing are a way of life for many residents of Idaho, but some activities by Native Americans have apparently conflicted with Idaho gun laws. Idaho is home to five reservations and several Native American tribes, including the Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai, Nez Perce, and Shoshone-Bannock.

A controversy over hunting rights erupted in September 2011, due to members of the Coeur d'Alene tribe hunting on non-reservation land in Benewah County, [according to The Coeur d'Alene Press](#).

The Native Americans believe they have that right because in the late 19th century, parts of the reservation were sold to non-tribal members by the federal government. Since then, tribal members still hunt on the land owned by non-tribal members.

The U.S. attorney in Idaho was called in by the Benewah County prosecutor because the state and county do not have jurisdiction over tribal members to deal with gun law violations or most other issues.

According to the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1968, Native American reservations function without state rule. The law allows only the federal government to oversee the reservations.

The Act also allows Native American Tribes to function almost autonomously with little federal intervention. It also allows the tribal members to manage federal resources on their own, eliminating federal government control.

Because Native American tribes have sovereign control over reservation lands, it is the tribal councils that determine the gun control laws on the reservations.

[According to Handgunlaw.us](#), some of those violations are operating a gun under the influence of alcohol or drugs, carrying a concealed weapon without proper authority, or aiming a gun at someone without self-defense. Guns are also forbidden to those who are mentally incapacitated or have been convicted of a felony.

This article does not constitute legal advice. Check the current gun laws before purchasing or traveling with a firearm.

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Cherokee named state's new Native American liaison

Published on Friday, 13 February 2015 20:27

Written by LENZY KREHBIEL-BURTON, Cherokee Phoenix Special Correspondent

OKLAHOMA CITY – A Cherokee Nation citizen has been tapped to be Oklahoma's next Native American liaison.

On Feb. 9, Gov. Mary Fallin announced via executive order that Chris Benge, a former state legislator from Berryhill, would be Oklahoma's secretary of state and Native American affairs. The move accommodates Benge's November 2013 appointment as secretary of state and is a promotion for the liaison position, making it officially part of the governor's Cabinet.

The Native American liaison, established in 2011 after the state Legislature abolished the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission, serves in an advisory capacity to the Governor's Office on tribal issues, including compacts and consultations between tribal governments and state agencies.

"Chris is a trusted member of my Cabinet and adviser on policy, economic and legislative issues," Fallin said. "As secretary of state, he also deals with officials from other countries who visit Oklahoma and works with them on trade and other issues. He will now extend that same mission to our tribes, which have a valuable and unique impact on Oklahoma's economy and our culture."

A graduate of Oklahoma State University, Benge served in the state House of Representatives from 1998 to 2010 and was Speaker of the House for the last three years of his term. After his 12 years in the state House, Benge was the director of intergovernmental and enterprise development for Tulsa Mayor Dewey Bartlett and most

recently, a senior vice president for the Tulsa Regional Chamber of Commerce.

“Whether it’s creating jobs, improving health care services or boosting education, Oklahoma has an extremely valuable partnership with the tribes,” Benge said. “The tribes have an estimated \$10.8 billion impact in the state’s production of goods and services, with tribal government and business operations employing more than 50,000 people, and supporting nearly 90,000 full-time jobs in the state.

“The relationship between the tribes and the state has developed momentum over the last few years. I’m looking forward to continuing to facilitate the good relationship between the state and the tribes.”

Benge’s predecessor, Kaw Nation citizen Jacque Secondine Hensley, was appointed in July 2012. According to the Fallin administration, she has accepted a tribally focused position with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

On Feb. 10, Cherokee Nation Secretary of State Chuck Hoskin Jr., praised the appointment and expressed confidence in the tribe’s ability to work with one of its own citizens.



“The Cherokee Nation looks forward to working with Secretary of State Chris Benge in his expanded role as the liaison to tribal governments for the Governor’s Office,” he said. “He is a Cherokee citizen and truly understands how tribes positively impact Oklahoma economically and enrich our great state culturally. His experience as speaker of the House and his success in the private sector gives him credibility, and I know elected tribal leaders of sovereign governments will be respected and valued when meeting with him. We anticipate Chris Benge will be a great advocate for the Cherokee Nation and the other 37 federally recognized tribes in Oklahoma.”

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Direct Link: <http://www.nativetimes.com/index.php/life/people/11147-chokeee-named-state-s-new-native-american-liaison>

Sioux Chef serves up Native American cuisine

- Article by: LEE SVITAK DEAN , Star Tribune
- Updated: February 14, 2015 - 9:08 PM

Sean Sherman serves up a message with his food: American Indian cuisine deserves recognition at the dinner table.  

Sean Sherman grew up on his grandfather's ranch on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, surrounded by antelope, grouse and the scent of juniper trees. Today as a Twin Cities chef, he's tapping into those familiar flavors as he cooks up his version of indigenous food.

He and other local purveyors will be featured Feb. 19 at the North Coast Nosh, an homage to American Indian food at the Minnesota History Center, sponsored by Heavy Table online magazine. In addition, the event will include a collection of culinary artifacts from the History Center and an exhibit of the work of George Morrison, an Ojibwe artist.

Sherman, 40, who is Oglala Lakota, worked for a time as a surveyor for the U.S. Forest Service.

"I had to go around to different spots in the Black Hills and label and age all the different plants in the area I was given. I realized that Native American people knew what all these plants were called and what they were good for. Later in life, as a chef, I got to thinking, 'Why isn't there more information on all that?'"

Today he focuses on native fare as he caters, teaches classes and makes plans for a family-style restaurant that will feature indigenous foods.

Q: What are our local native foods?

A: You can't really get more Minnesotan than what is here, so you have the wild rice, the maple syrups, the blueberries, all the berries that grow throughout the season, all the fish that's in the lakes, the walleyes, the northerns and white fish, the wild turkeys, duck, venison, rabbit. All this food was here forever. Corn, squash, beans. I might use a little more wild flavors, but those flavors have been around us all the time, too, the tree foods, the cedar, sumac, balsam fir, pine spruce.

Q: Is this the time for native food?

A: Some people are interested in the foraging knowledge that I'm utilizing. Some people are interested in the seed savers and heirloom variety side of what I'm doing. Of course, there are other people interested in hunting and fishing. Some people are interested in history. Some people are on special diets where this diet fits in perfectly. There are lots of wild organic kinds of ingredients, and everything is so locally and regionally based. Some people are interested in the economic development side of it, of being able to utilize a lot of these Native-produced pieces on a larger scale.

So the interest is hitting quite a few different points. The biggest one is really just showing people there is a Native American food culture out there and it's always been there. It just hasn't been utilized for a long time. It's kind of silly because you can find any cuisine in the world in the city, but not the one that came from under your feet.

Q: Many people think of native foods as all the same, from California to the East Coast. How varied is it?

A: I chose to focus only on Dakota and Ojibwe because I wanted people to understand how regional food systems are. It's so different across the country, not only in food, but in culture, religion and style and the food that's around you. Even for me growing up on Pine Ridge as Lakota, those traditional food systems were different even from the Dakota out here [in Minnesota]. When you get out to the West Coast by the shore, by the ocean, they weren't even farming because they were feeding off the ocean, and the forest was giving them everything they needed. And then you go in the Southwest and the Southeast, it's a completely different style again.

There's no way to lump-sum Native American food into one group. It would be like saying one plate represents all of European food. There are so many little pockets of culture and differences all over the place.

Q: How important is authenticity?

A: I've been promoting both traditional and modern Native American foods because some of that I have to bring into the modern world. But all the components are really simple. I have a real minimalist style of cooking. It could be a matter of cooking wild rice with blueberries and that's the seasoning. And maybe just a tiny bit of salt or maple sugar, or something like that. But it's just keeping within those guidelines. I'm not putting in a lot of butter or bacon or cream. It's just real clean food.

In some ways it seems to follow the diets today: gluten-free diets, paleo diets and stuff like that. This has a lot more basis than some of those diets, because it already was a lifestyle as it kept people really healthy for centuries. And it's super low on glycemic point levels and there's not a ton of carbohydrates to break down and sugars and stuff like that. And it's high in fiber.

Q: Are Minnesotans ready for a taste of the past?

A: Even for a lot of Native American people, this past isn't that long ago. These are foods our grandparents were eating. Europeans are still eating foods that their great-

grandparents were eating and holding onto that cultural identification. So it's really no different for Native American people here.

History unfortunately tries to make it sound like Native American culture was centuries ago. But it wasn't. It was just a couple generations ago, really. And there is still Native American culture here today. It's not like it's wiped off the map completely. It's totally viable.

Direct Link: <http://www.startribune.com/lifestyle/taste/291763091.html>

Native American women share culture in new PBS episode

By [Adrian Gomez / Asst. Arts Editor, Reel NM](#)

PUBLISHED: Sunday, February 15, 2015 at 12:02 am

“A Thousand Voices” took about a year to complete and tells the stories of Native American women.

It's said that “it takes a thousand voices to tell a single story.”

With this premise in mind, the voices of strong tribal women mingle and lead us through the history of Spanish, Mexican and United States invasions of the American Southwest.

Past the era of boarding schools, the reaffirmation of the beauty, strength and vigor sustains the culture and languages of New Mexican tribes today.

The feature film “A Thousand Voices” focuses on women who carry forth the collective memory, traditions and beliefs of their ancestral families, clans and tribal communities.

On TV

“A Thousand Voices” will air at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, on New Mexico PBS, channel 5.1.

Each woman, though not speaking for her tribe, tells a story deeply rooted to her culture. It will air at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 19, on New Mexico PBS channel 5.1.

Veronica Tiller is an author and an historian who participated in the film. She is Jicarilla Apache and was asked to be involved in the planning of the film.

“This topic is very important,” she says. “Getting the stories about Native women and their role in society is the main focus. I think this film is trying to correct the stereotypes that we've had to live with all these centuries.”

Tiller provided the historical thread to the film. As an historian, she enjoys being one of the persons who preserves the story of the tribes.

“It’s been part of my life since I was a child,” she says. “It not only gives us the power and the enlightenment, it gets us closer to the truth.”

Matthew Martinez served as a co-producer on the project. He is the grandson of Esther Martinez, who was a linguist and storyteller for the Tewa people of New Mexico who died in 2006.

He says the film is about Native women who have chosen lifestyles carrying them into modern life and different arenas, from writing poetry about the ordinary lives of Native people to running a construction company that remodels traditional homes at a pueblo.

He says it shatters stereotypes and features interviews with women from the Navajo Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe, Jicarilla Apache Tribe, Kiowa Tribe, Pueblo de Cochiti, Ohkay Owingeh and the pueblos of Acoma, Laguna, Jemez, Kewa, Pojoaque, Santa Clara, Taos, Nambe and San Ildefonso.

“I wanted to get involved because it’s important to tell these stories,” Martinez says. “We want to educate students by telling the stories of life and its struggles.”

Martinez and crew worked on the film for about a year. The crew researched and found archival photographs and footage, and set up interviews with community leaders.

“We had a lot of support from the start,” he says. “In our previous project ‘Canes of Power’ we noticed there weren’t many women’s voices in it. So we wanted to do this project and then it snowballed from there.”

Martinez says as people began to get word of the project, they wanted to help out. He says it was overwhelming at first, but eventually everyone found a place.

“It’s crucial to tell the stories, and education is a lifelong process,” he says. “I don’t think a lot of people realize the rich culture and history that is around us in this state. I’d like to get this film into the schools. That’s one of the goals of Silver Bullet (Productions), which helmed the project.”

Direct Link: <http://www.abqjournal.com/541708/blogs/native-women-lead-new-pbs-episode.html>

Native Americans fight to keep pipeline off their land

Gas line threatens sacred Native American site in Lancaster County.

Chief Carlos Whitewolf beat a small hand drum and sang a Native American prayer for Mother Earth in the cold January air in Hershey.

Many of the 50 or so other protesters outside the Hershey Lodge, where national Republican Party leaders were attending a retreat, demonstrated against issues such as the Keystone XL Pipeline and climate change.

But Whitewolf, chief of the Northern Arawak Tribal Nation of Pennsylvania, was objecting to something more local — the Atlantic Sunrise pipeline project in Lancaster County.

Whitewolf calls the project "disrespectful" because the pipeline's current route goes through parts of southwestern Lancaster County rich with ancient Native American artifacts and burial sites.

The project is a proposed expansion of a natural gas pipeline that would traverse about 190 miles, through 10 Pennsylvania counties: Lancaster, Clinton, Columbia, Lebanon, Luzerne, Lycoming, Northumberland, Schuylkill, Susquehanna and Wyoming counties.

Opposition has been strongest in Lancaster County, where farmers, environmentalists, Native Americans and others have fought to stop the project since Williams Partners, builders of the pipeline, sought approval with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission last spring.

The resistance to the project echos struggles against natural gas pipelines around the country. At a Jan. 27 National Press Club meeting, FERC Chairman Cheryl LaFleur said gas pipelines face "unprecedented opposition."

"We have a situation here," LaFleur said.

If President Obama's recent Clean Power Plan is to succeed at reducing the output of carbon pollution by the United States, she said, it will need to rely on natural gas and a robust pipeline infrastructure.

That doesn't bode well for opponents of the Atlantic Sunrise pipeline, who cite concerns including the environment, safety and property values. But, of all the protests, some see the Native American angle as their best bet to stop the pipeline or get it rerouted.

"The artifacts, the burial sites, the Native American occupation, is the only thing that is federally recognized," said Robin Maguire, of Conestoga Township, Lancaster County. "That is the only thing FERC will listen to. They don't want to hear how you bought your house for your retirement. They don't care," said Maguire, who is part of the Lancaster Against Pipelines group.

It's normal for pipeline companies to conduct surveys to identify plants, endangered species and environments that might be disturbed by a pipeline. But going through land important to Native Americans may make the process even more sensitive.

By law, companies must survey land to find items and sites that hold cultural or historical significance. One of those could be Conestoga Indian Town, which many say is the most important Native American site in the state.

If the company finds anything relevant, FERC may require the company to reroute the pipeline, go under items or move them.

"If any sites are found or potentially found to be significant, then either avoidance of the resource or mitigation, such as data recovery, may be warranted," Tamara Young-Allen, a FERC spokesperson, said in an email.

Data recovery means the company would be required to excavate items, Young-Allen said. Whitewolf and others are adamantly opposed to this option.

He has vowed that he and other members of the American Indian Movement will block bulldozers and occupy land if the project is approved.

In early January, eight people, including Whitewolf, were arrested after they blocked a Williams crew from conducting test drilling near a Native American site registered with the state.

But the company says all the uproar could be for nothing because the route of the pipeline will change before Williams submits its official application in March, and it could avoid sensitive cultural areas, said Christopher Stockton, a Williams spokesman.

He said Williams is aware of the cultural sensitivity of the area and, as required by law, is working with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to identify the areas and must follow state and federal protocols for avoiding such sites or finding ways to mitigate disturbance.

"We don't just put a pipeline somewhere without doing our homework," Stockton said. And the pipeline would never go through areas where human bones are found, he assured.

Despite what the company says, opponents are skeptical, and they're using every means to play up the issue, including registering new Native American historical sites with the state.

For months, Maguire and David Jones, an amateur archaeologist and part of Lancaster Against Pipelines, have asked property owners in the area if they can search their land for artifacts. They've found tools, jewelry, weapons.

Archaeologists have said southwestern Lancaster County is a virtual smorgasbord of artifacts because it had the largest Native American settlements in the state.

"This is our Machu Picchu," said Tim Trussell, a professor of archaeology at Millersville University, in testimony to FERC at an August public meeting. "There is literally nowhere else in the entire state that contains a greater concentration of archaeological sites, features, artifacts or human burials."

Maguire and Jones have managed to find enough material to register eight new historical sites with the Historical and Museum Commission in hopes that their efforts will protect the land from the pipeline's path.

They're particularly concerned about the pipeline going through Conestoga Indian Town, an Indian refugee area in the early 18th century. The people were descendants of the Susquehannocks and occupied land reserved for them by William Penn. A famous Susquehannock chief is thought to be buried there.

The tribe was wiped out after members were murdered by the Paxton Boys, a group of maverick frontiersman, in 1763 in what is known as the "Conestoga Massacre."

Today, there are no federally recognized tribes left in Pennsylvania.

Under the National Historic Preservation Act, federal agencies, in this case FERC, must require pipelines be built with minimal impact to historic or culturally relevant sites.

In addition to working with the Historical and Museum Commission to identify these areas, Williams has consulted with archaeologists to conduct shovel tests, digging small holes every 50 feet along the proposed route to look for artifacts.

But Maguire and others complain that those tests don't go far enough and could miss important historic items.

"It's just a one-foot hole every 50 feet. It's nothing," she said.

Trussell agreed in his testimony.

"Now you may believe that because an archaeological survey is being done prior to construction, any sites and burials on this route can be identified and avoided ahead of time. Unfortunately, this is not at all true," he said.

When "skulls and femurs are being kicked up" by Williams' equipment, there will be a "firestorm of public outrage," he added.

The Historical and Museum Commission regularly reviews Williams' plans and surveys for the project, said Howard Pollman, an agency spokesman.

"So far, [Williams] has been rerouting and trying to go around archaeological sites," Pollman said. "We have been assured they have every intention of going around rather than through Conestoga town."

FERC and Williams have also contacted federal and state recognized Native American tribes with ties to the area about the project. FERC asked tribes if they have any concerns about it and if they'd submit comments. The problem is, since Pennsylvania has no recognized tribes, none of the Native Americans contacted actually live in Pennsylvania.

Whitewolf, whose tribe is originally from the Caribbean and whose ancestors were relocated to the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Cumberland County more than a century ago, was angry because he was not directly contacted.

He and other Native Americans feel it's their duty to protect the land, bones and artifacts of these people.

"Who else is going to fight for them?" Whitewolf asked.

PublicSource is an investigative news group in Pittsburgh that's funded by a combination of local and national foundations. The Morning Call is a news partner of PublicSource.

Direct Link: <http://www.mcall.com/news/nationworld/pennsylvania/mc-native-americans-protest-shale-drilling-20150215-story.html#page=1>

Tonya Gonnella Frichner, Monumental Figure in Indigenous Rights Struggle, Has Passed

[Gale Courey Toensing](#)

2/16/15

A citizen of the Onondaga Nation, whose Snipe Clan name was Gowanahs, Tonya Gonnella Frichner left peacefully during the first hour of February 14, 2015 surrounded by family members and friends in her New Jersey home after a valiant decade-long battle with cancer. She was 67.

Being with Gonnella Frichner at the end of her life was a beautiful experience, Betty Lyons, Gonnella Frichner's niece, told ICTMN. "I was laying next to her and holding her hand and it helped me to help her—and that's how she was. She always made you feel good. Even in her death there was that generosity. She passed peacefully. Her husband was the most wonderful husband—he's like a father to me. He made sure that she had exactly what she wanted right to the end—that she got home and had the peace of being surrounded with family. It was like a gift she gave to us to be with her when she passed. It's not about what you do in this world, it's about who you really are."

In addition to who she was, Gonnella Frichner will be remembered for the extraordinary number of things she did with passion and skillfulness.

She was a lawyer and activist who devoted her life to the pursuit of human rights for Indigenous Peoples on a national and international level. From 2008 to 2011, she served as North American Regional Representative to the [United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues](#). In that position, her mandates included human rights, economic and social development, environment, health, education and media. Indigenous Peoples, nations, and non-governmental organizations nominated Gonnella Frichner to the position for her work in the international arena.

During that time, Gonnella Frichner served as vice-chairperson as well as the Special Rapporteur for the “Preliminary study of the impact on Indigenous Peoples of the international legal construct known as the Doctrine of Discovery,” which was written by ICTMN columnist Steve Newcomb and submitted to the UNPFII, Ninth Session in 2010.

Gonnella Frichner served as an active participant and legal and diplomatic counsel to Indigenous delegations in virtually all United Nations international forums affecting Indigenous Peoples especially during the drafting, negotiations and passage of the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP), which was overwhelmingly adopted on September 13, 2007, by the UN General Assembly. The Declaration sets the minimum standard for the survival, dignity and individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples globally.

Suzan Shown Harjo, Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee, who received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in November for her lifelong work in support of American Indian rights, praised Gonnella Frichner, especially for her work on the Declaration.

“Tonya was a dedicated, focused and accomplished Native woman who worked tirelessly for Indigenous Peoples’ rights. Her contributions to the structure and content of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are inestimable,” Harjo said. “She is one of those irreplaceable people, who will be missed and long remembered. Only Mother Earth Endures.”

Gonnella Frichner was the president and founder of the [American Indian Law Alliance](#) (AILA), an indigenous, nonprofit, non-governmental organization (NGO) that works with indigenous nations, communities and organizations in their struggle for sovereignty, human rights and social justice. The AILA is one of only 20 indigenous NGO’s with special consultative status with the U.N.’s Economic and Social Council. Lyons, a research associate at the AILA, said her aunt’s work will continue.

“She worked us like dogs, I’m telling you! And she worked harder than all of us,” Lyons said, laughing. “We are certainly committed to continuing her work; she asked that of me and I made that promise to her. We are going to continue in our struggle to advance our causes. We’re all committed at the law alliance to make sure that that happens.”

Gonnella Frichner was also a professor of American Indian history and law, Federal Indian Law, and anthropology and human rights for over 20 years. She taught at The City College of the City University of New York (CUNY) and Manhattanville College for eight years, as well as CUNY Hunter College and New York University. She also served as an Associate Member of Columbia's University Seminar on Indigenous Studies.

Gonnella Frichner served on several boards including serving as the chairperson of the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples, the City University of New York School of Law Board of Visitors, the Interfaith Center of New York, the Connie Hogarth Center for Social Action, the Seven Eagles Corporation, the Flying Eagle Women Fund for Peace, Justice and Sovereignty, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, the Boarding School Healing Project, and the Iroquois Nationals Lacrosse Team, the official national team of the Haudenosaunee since 1984.

Gonnella Frichner was showered with awards and accolades for her work. She received the Drums Along the Hudson award in June 2014, shared with the Honorable David N. Dinkins, the 106th Mayor of New York City. Other awards include the Harriet Tubman Humanitarian Award, the Thunderbird Indian of the Year Award, the Ellis Island Congressional Medal of Honor, the American Indian Community House International Service Award, the Silver Cloud Singer Outstanding Service Award for advancing Indigenous Youth, the Ms. Foundation Female Role Model of the Year, which was shared with author J.K. Rowling, and the Mosaic Council, Inc. Visionary Award for Making a Difference, which was shared with entertainer Queen Latifah.

Other honors included the New York County Lawyers Association Award for Outstanding Public Service, the Ingrid Washinawatok El-Issa O'Peqtaw Metaehmoh - Flying Eagle Woman Fund for Peace, Justice, and Sovereignty Award, the Iroquois Nationals Lacrosse Team Recognition, a City of Philadelphia proclamation in honor of United Nations Day, for Frichner's work to "promote the rights for Native people around the world," recognition from the Temple of Understanding, recognition from the Beacon Two Row Wampum Festival, and the Alston Bannerman Fellowship.

On October 24, 2010, the 65th anniversary of the creation of the U.N., Gonnella Frichner addressed an audience at the University of Maine. She talked about how Indigenous Peoples got a seat at the U.N. table and their continuing struggle for sovereignty and self-determination. She thanked the audience members for recognizing United Nations Day, but noted that Americans largely view international issues as unimportant. "I don't know if it's because the U.S. is so isolated geographically and doesn't think the rest of the world has anything to do with it, but it sort of acts that way," she said, "The rest of us know that it's never been that way and it's never going to be that way, and once globalization hit in 1492, it hasn't slowed down, it's just accelerated and we are all interconnected and that is just the way it is."

Calling hours will be held at the Ballweg & Lunsford Funeral Home at 2584 Field Lane in LaFayette, New York on Tuesday, February 17 from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Funeral services will be on Wednesday, February 18 at 10 a.m. at the Ballweg & Lunsford Funeral Home and at 11 a.m. at the longhouse. Internment will be on the Onondaga Nation Cemetery, located on Route 11a.

Donations can be made to the American Indian Law Alliance to carry on Gonnella Frichner's work. For more information on donations, email aila@ailanyc.org.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/16/tonya-gonnella-frichner-monumental-figure-indigenous-rights-struggle-has-passed-159218>

'Drunktown's Finest' Review: Native American Drama Touchingly Reveals the Struggles Behind the Stereotypes

Movies | By [Inkoo Kang](#) on February 19, 2015 @ 9:47 am



"Drunktown's Finest"

Director Sydney Freeland offers a rare glimpse into life on a reservation while treating her characters like people, not sociological specimens

Two decades ago, Sydney Freeland's hometown of Gallup, New Mexico, was labeled "Drunktown, USA" by a national news program. In elementary school at the time, the reservation-raised Freeland found it strange that journalists had descended into town mostly to point their cameras at the local winos.

"Drunktown's Finest" is the first-time writer-director's effort to humanize the struggles that have given way to Native American stereotypes about broken families, chronic unemployment, violent or criminal behavior, and, of course, alcoholism. Rather than

dispel those stereotypes, though, Freeland spins them into moving human drama, achieving a delicate balancing act between heartbreaking realism and sincere optimism.

Set on a Navajo reservation (and executive-produced by [Robert Redford](#)), the film focuses on three interlocking stories about fractured souls searching for a sense of wholeness. The standout character among the trio is aspiring model Felixia (newcomer Carmen Moore), whose transgender identity is met with sympathy by her grandparents and lust by her johns, but remains a liability outside of her small social circle.

Entrepreneurial but acutely vulnerable, Felixia's pursuit of a better life is perhaps all the more compelling for its unlikeliness to succeed. At an audition for a calendar shoot featuring Navajo women, she's quickly recognized by a former schoolmate who used to know her as "Felix." The winking gap between Felixia's teeth on the side of her mouth tells her life story far better than her cherry-red nails or artificially bronzed hair ever could. She may be too destitute to afford braces, but she's sexy and glamorous in her own way.

Felixia isn't the most beneficial influence herself. She meets Sick Boy (a smoldering Jeremiah Bitsui) at a grocery store, and the two almost immediately start playing drinking games while his pregnant wife (Elizabeth Frances) waits for him at home. The film's reservation is full of dysfunctional fathers, and Sick Boy aspires to buck the trend, but luck isn't on his side. His fists get him into trouble early and often, colliding with the mugs of cops and family members. With Walter White wannabes as friends and a tendency to keep pounding shots — he used to think alcoholism was an inevitable life stage between adolescence and adulthood, he confesses to Felixia — Sick Boy's hopes to provide for his family through an army career begin to slip away.



The character with the most promising future is Nizhoni (novice actress MorningStar Angeline), and yet she might be the most confused of the three. Adopted as a seven-year-old orphan by white parents, the college-bound high-schooler searches for the surviving members of her biological family. The growing tensions between Nizhoni and her vaguely racist parents feel heavy-handed, even when they're believable. Also clumsy is

her enormous naiveté, as when she dismisses two reservation residents' beliefs as "superstition" while blithely informing them that she's going to become a missionary because she enjoys helping people, seemingly unaware of the Christian church's disastrous meddling in Native American communities.

She's an apple, they decide: red on the outside, white on the inside. But that doesn't explain how she encounters the film's most striking image — that of a white horse with red handprints all over it — first in her sketch pad, then in real life.

The eventual convergence of these three plotlines proves rather satisfying, both emotionally and thematically. Moore and Angeline's performances are occasionally flat, as are those of several of the supporting players, but it's a treat to witness the rare mostly-Native American cast in action. (Human faces are wonderfully diverse, but the ones that usually end up on the big screen tend to be similar in a lot of ways.)

"Drunktown's Finest" shouldn't be viewed simply as an anthropological curiosity, though, but as the promising debut of a gifted filmmaker who wants to show the beating and hurting hearts of the people behind the headlines.

Direct Link: <http://www.thewrap.com/drunktowns-finest-review-jeremiah-bitsui-carmen-moore/>

Man Who Threw Beer on Native American Kids Charged With Disorderly Conduct

[Simon Moya-Smith](#)

2/18/15

A man who hurled beer and racial slurs at a group of Native American kids last month at a hockey game in Rapid City, South Dakota, will be charged with disorderly conduct, officials said Wednesday in a statement.

Suspect Trace O'Connell, 41, of Philip, faces up to 30 days in jail and a \$500 if convicted, police said. O'Connell is accused of pouring beer on a group of Native American students during a Rapid City Rush hockey game at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. He's also accused of telling the kids to "go back to the reservation."

"After an extensive investigation by the Rapid City Police Department, a thorough review of the case by my office as well as the Pennington County State's Attorney's Office, the facts supported bringing this charge," City Attorney Joel Landeen said in a press release.

Before alerting the public to the charge, city officials reached out to the family of the victims at a meeting Wednesday. The meeting ended early due to "tension," Rapid City Police Media and Communications officer Brendyn Medina wrote in a press release.

Following the news that O’Connell would not face child abuse or assault charges – crimes the families felt were committed – a question and answer portion of the meeting commenced, but it soon turned “chaotic with frustration and high emotions readily displayed by those in attendance.”

“For safety reasons, and out of concerns for the school environment, the decision was made to depart from the gymnasium,” Police Chief Karl Jegeris said.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/18/man-who-threw-beer-native-american-kids-charged-disorderly-conduct-159284>

2 Broke Girls slammed for Aboriginal joke

8 hours ago February 20, 2015 7:08PM

American comedy show 2 Broke Girls called out by Australian viewers for Aboriginal ‘joke’



AUSTRALIA’S former prime minister Kevin Rudd has called on US show 2 Broke Girls to apologise after it made a racist joke about Indigenous Australians.

Mr Rudd tweeted today that the joke was a “pathetic attempt at racist humour”.

“How low can you go for canned laughter? program should apologise,” he tweeted.

The popular American comedy show was called out by Australian viewers for the offensive remark, which occurred during the first five minutes into the [season 4 episode titled “And the Fun Factory”](#).

It aired on Channel Nine on Tuesday night and was watched by 324,000 people.

In the scene a male character reveals that he has been flirting with an Australian girl online and says: “She’s part Aboriginal, but she has a great personality!”

Unhappy viewers took to social media with former Channel Nine personality and *The Block* contestant Chantelle Ford just one of the many to voice her disgust.

Leisa, 31, from Adelaide was watching with her husband at the time and says she was horrified by the remark.

“I’m not a huge fan of the show, but we just happened to be watching the telly when the episode came on,” she told news.com.au, “we (my husband and I) both just stopped and stared at the TV. We couldn’t believe it had aired on our screens. We were both like what the hell? You can’t say that about our national people.”

“They were inferring that Aboriginal means inferior. The other characters laughed like it was the funniest thing they had ever heard.”

Leisa said she is not indigenous, but said: “I do actually have several friends who are Aboriginal, and family members who have Aboriginal heritage as well.

“I just think, any kind of racism against any person when it’s celebrated like it’s a joke, it’s just not OK.”



Kat Dennings, left, and Beth Behrs of *2 Broke Girls*. Source: News Limited

Leisa said she contacted Channel 9 on Facebook publicly as soon as the episode aired, and then tagged them in a comment on Wednesday night. She still hasn’t had a response from the network. Her friends have since been re-posting her comment as well.

There were at least three other posts on Nine’s Facebook page and several tweets regarding the offensive episode.

Leisa asked: “Doesn’t someone watch it before it goes to air so that we know it meets our code of practice?”

Another viewer who saw the episode posted the following on [social media forum Reddit](#): “So I was just watching *2 Broke Girls* (Don’t judge me, it was on in the background) and a scene came up where the guy they were working with (an Asian caricature basically) was talking to them about a girl he’s flirting with online, saying “She’s part Aboriginal, but she has a great personality!”

The episode has already [aired in the US in January](#) follows the two main characters, waitresses Caroline (Beth Behrs) and Max (Kat Dennings), as they try to produce their new cupcake T-shirt range.

It is not the first time the show has been criticised for its offensive content. [In a 2011 column, the New Yorker](#) called it “so racist it is less offensive than baffling” in relation to repeated jokes made by the main characters about their American-Asian boss.



Actors Kat Dennings (L) and Beth Behrs from the TV program '2 Broke Girls'. *Source:* Supplied

Created by *Sex and the City*'s Michael Patrick King, the show which debuted in the US in 2011 has had much success in pushing the envelope of tasteful comedy.

While on a discussion panel in 2012, King defended walking the fine line between what is funny and what is offensive by saying that the show is filmed in front of a studio audience who tell the creators whether they like a joke or not.

“I feel no need to pull away from the brand of 2 Broke Girls which is ‘in-your-face girls.’ It is ballsy. It is right in your face, and hopefully funny. ... People pull away from something if it’s not in good taste. More and more people are leaning in to 2 Broke Girls.”

News.com.au contacted Channel Nine to inquire whether any complaints were made to the broadcaster and is yet to hear back.

Direct Link: <http://www.news.com.au/entertainment/tv/broke-girls-slammed-for-aboriginal-joke/story-fnk8579h-1227228103407>